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table of

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief
& Creative Director | 7

Fiction

“Veins and Arteries” by Antonia Alksnis | 9

Ed. Lara Thompson, Asst. Ed. Ben Ghan

“The Heaviest Burden” by Natasha Ramoutar | 15

Ed. Lara Thompson, Asst. Ed. Polina Zak

“Target Practice” by W-I Farnan | 17

Ed. Lara Thompson, Asst. Ed. Rej Ford

“Leipszthou” by Bruce Meryer | 20

Ed. Lara Thompson, Asst. Ed. Stephan Goslinski

Poetry

“(S.A.D.)” by Victoria Liao | 28

Ed. Christopher Boccia, Asst. Ed. Stephanie Gao

“The Knight’s Inn” by Kerrie McCreadie | 31

Ed. Christopher Boccia, Asst. Ed. Polina Zak

“A Fancy for Feathers” by Kerrie McCreadie | 33

Ed. Christopher Boccia, Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko

contents

“Prometheus” by Calahan Janik-Jones | 35

Ed. Christopher Boccia, Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko

Graphic Fiction

“A Room with a View” by Sarah Crawley | 39

Ed. Amy Wang

“Just Peachy: The Tale of a Demon, a Princess, and a Peach Gone Bag”
by Janet Feng, Dorothy anne Manuel & Kirsten Yeung | 43

Ed. Amy Wang, Asst. Ed. Stephanie Gao

Art

“Eye” by Lina Nguyen | 50

“Untitled Collage” by Sunny Kim | 51

“Don’t Forget The Lady of Elche” by Michael Baptista | 52

Nonfiction

“Representing the ‘Fear of Going Mad’: An Analysis of Grief in *Oculus* and *The Babadook*” by
Emily Scherzinger | 54

Ed. Janice To, Asst. Ed. Victoria Liao

“Interview with Amanda Sun” by Margaryta Golovchenko | 59

Ed. Janice To

Biographies | 63

How to Get Involved | 68

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief & the Creative Director

Alexander De Pompa | Lorna Antoniazzi

Why the rose-coloured glasses?

This is a common question that we are asked when people first encounter *The Spectatorial*. Although the etymological connection between ‘speculative’ and ‘spectacles’ is clear—they derive from the same Latin root word, *speculārī*, which means to spy out, examine, or observe—it seems strange to many that we would emblemize a metaphor that denotes unrealistic optimism. Isn’t that playing into all the assumptions that the speculative is childish and escapist?

Perhaps. But anyone reading *The Spectatorial* would come to the conclusion that the rose-coloured glasses are just bait: even when our imaginations are at their most devious and fantastical, we never shy away from the hard questions.

We have always held that the speculative is not a way to escape from life, but a way to escape *into* life. The speculative allows us to articulate our pain in a more honest way, and gives us the strength necessary to reclaim our agency when we feel disempowered. We are proud to see that the writers and artists published in this volume have continued this tradition of facing the things that haunt them. Their empathy and generosity of spirit inspire us every day to continue this work.

The stories, poems, essays, comics, and artwork in this volume unflinchingly explore the fractured and lovely terrains of our psyches and the scars and tattoos of our bodies. Through dystopia, alternate history, and myth, they examine how our sense of safety can be ruptured in a single moment, and how we can spend years struggling to regain a sense of who we were *before*. By exploring the porous boundaries between the real and the unreal, they allow us glimpses into the possibility of hope and healing.

Each year we try to take the journal to a new imaginative locus and explore something we have not done before. With the fifth volume, we have changed the visual language of *The Spectatorial*. In this volume, all of this illustrations are naturally formatted to fit the page, and none of them are blocked in by ‘hard’ borders. What began as a small alteration to make all of the images ‘borderless’ has offered us a new way to perceive the illustrations, for they now echo the amorphousness and limitlessness of the speculative.

We are drawn to the speculative because it reveals us to our shadowy reflections in unexpected metaphors. With the speculative we can transmute our pain into beauty—a beauty that demands to be seen, acknowledged, and witnessed. *The Spectatorial’s* rose-coloured glasses represent not magical thinking or unbridled phantasm, but the willingness to be vulnerable and to allow ourselves to be seen—and in so doing for us to see clearly, even if fleetingly, what makes us human and what makes our lives meaningful.

Sincerely,

Alexander De Pompa
Editor-in-Chief

Lorna Antoniazzi
Creative Director

fiction

Veins and Arteries

By Antonia Alksnis

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Ben Ghan



ILLUSTRATED BY SHAYLA SABADA

Alice was freezing. Even her face was numb, though it was hidden beneath a gas mask and so was sheltered from the biting wind. Crouched on the edge of the jagged cliffs that interrupted the desert, she had been watching the empty sand for hours.

The mad roar of the city arena was lost to distance and the choking dust of the atmosphere, but its fevered glow stained the sky just the same. The wash of bright electric blue on the horizon lent an otherworldly hue to the rolling hills of sand that stretched, wave-like, into the distance until their deep ultramarine faded into blackness.

Through her binoculars, Alice could see a small crop of skeleton buildings huddled a short distance away from the cliff wall. They resembled dead beasts: all blank eyes and twisted metal supports, their crumbling floors spewing chunks of concrete onto the sand drifts. A breath of wind lifted the cloak around her ankles and cast a film of dust over the rock beside her, then died away.

Ivan and Vee should have been back already.

She fiddled with a dial, fingers clumsy from her leather gloves and the gnawing ache of cold, and then suddenly the group of buildings appeared closer. Something shifted in the shadows under a cracked slab of overhanging concrete, and as she focused the binoculars once more, she could make out two figures. The first was crouched in a sagging doorway while the second stood just behind, straight and still.

Their gear was familiar. Alice recognized the antique design of the gas mask on the former—it was long, protruding like the snout of a jackal. Vee's 2032 model. And the stance of the other would have been unmistakable even without the signature iron spear strapped to his back.

Clicking the binoculars closed, Alice stood abruptly and picked up the iron crook at her side. Bracing a foot against the rock, she launched herself from the ledge.

Even as her heart jumped into her throat, she reveled in the weightlessness her body assumed in the still air. Turning as she leapt, she grabbed the rock with the hook, swung, and used the momentum to wrench the crook loose once more, dropping to the next level unharmed. Without waiting to catch her breath, she jumped from the last ledge. Landing hard, she put one hand down for balance, and waited.

The others approached, walking laboriously through the loose sand. Ivan was supporting Vee as she limped forward—one arm cradled against her chest as though broken, that jackal-nose pointed downwards in pain.

It took a few minutes for them to reach the foot of the cliffs. "You took your sweet time," Alice said. It came out colder than she had meant, filtered by the gas mask.

"We need to go," was Ivan's clipped reply. On the side of his mask, a drop of bright blue fluid seeped from the torn tubing and rolled down his cloak.

"We got caught by the generator complex guards," Vee clarified, sounding slightly dazed. "They were waiting. Ambush. Someone must have told them our plans."

"We have to get back to the base," Ivan said. "I'm running out of oxygen supplement." He shrugged Vee off his arm and pushed past Alice. "Make sure she doesn't fall," he ordered. "She's lost blood." He strode on ahead, and the sterile blue light from the city glinted on the spear strapped to his back before he receded into the dusty haze.

Alice pulled Vee's good arm over her shoulder, shifting her feet to compensate for the extra weight. "What happened?" she asked.

“Got shot. A few times, with new tech. The fusion guns.” With her wounded arm, she gestured to the bandages on her side, hurriedly applied over her midsection—and then held very still. She might have winced; Alice couldn’t tell through her mask.

Ivan would be walking ahead of them, she knew, but not by much. Probably just out of sight, intent on self-imposed isolation. A year ago, he might have helped support Vee, torn oxygen unit notwithstanding.

They arrived after an hour. The dark cave was one of many indistinguishable fissures in the forbidding rock wall. No survey scouts unfortunate enough to patrol so far from the city would spare it a second glance.

Alice and Vee entered to find Ivan waiting for them, motionless. “Are you just going to stand there?” Alice asked in irritation.

“I can’t lift it right now,” he said, voice muffled. She noticed he was holding the tubing of his mask with both hands, trying to keep any more fluid from leaking out.

With a sigh that came out of the mask filter sounding like static, Alice helped Vee to lean against the cave wall and then knelt to lift a heavy iron ring in the floor. The trapdoor rose with a crack of protest, sending a cloud of fine white dust into the air. Alice lowered herself in and was swallowed by shadow. The sensation of empty space surrounded her, and she took a few careful steps in a circle, eyes straining to make sense of the vague impressions of shapes around her.

“You here, Quintus? Turn on the lantern, already.” Alice reached for a flare, but the grating sound of metal sliding against metal suddenly rent the silence, and a stream of red sparks momentarily illuminated the rough-hewn walls of the cave. Raising a hand to her eyes, Alice squinted—the lurid afterimages burned into her eyes made it even harder to see.

“Welcome back,” a voice said dramatically, with an edge of cruel humour. “I’ve been expecting you.” The sound came again, this time with only enough stray sparks to illuminate the crescent smile gleaming from the shadows for a second.

Alice finally lit the flare. As its fuse jumped to life, the walls of the cave lit up with trembling green brilliance, and the figure sitting in the corner was thrown into sharp relief. Settled on a crate, with twin swords lying across his lap, he exuded the wired confidence of a power-mad monarch. His face was oddly bare without a gas mask. His eyes looked feverish, irritated by the chalky dust of the cavern. He reached over and flicked on the lantern, just as the flare died down.

“How did the mission go?” Quintus asked. “Where’s our fearless leader, and the apple of his eye?”

Alice snorted, ignoring his questions. “Where’s your mask?”

His smile faded, and his voice grew petulant. “I don’t feel like wearing it. It clouds the senses, and the recycled air tastes like blood... Why does it taste like blood, Alice?”

Before she could answer, she was interrupted by Ivan hitting the ground. He stumbled on the landing, off-balance from the hand still clutching the leaking tube, and staggered upright. A guttural sucking noise came from his mask, and a stream of blue, now riddled with lumps of congealing gel, splattered onto the floor.

“Ah! Hail the conquering hero. Now with more goo.”

“Get the toolkit and some tubing,” Ivan said. “And, for god’s sake, put on your mask.”

Quintus did not reach for the discarded gas mask sitting beside him. Getting to his feet with an obstinate lack of speed, he grabbed a small pack from a nearby shelf. He tossed it to Ivan, who managed to catch it with his free hand. As Ivan slipped to the side to attend to the broken gas mask, Alice moved a crate directly under the trapdoor, helped Vee through the hatch, and pulled it closed. She threw the crook into a corner.

Vee’s breathing was shallow and laboured. She wavered on her feet before Quintus swiftly stooped and picked her up. Unceremoniously knocking some tools and papers to the ground in the process, he lifted her onto the large wooden table that stood in the corner of the room.

“Right then,” Alice said. “Let’s see how bad these fusion guns really are.” She pulled the cloak away to expose Vee’s side, and cut away the bandages. It was bad—four holes were burned right through her clothes, the edges singed and exuding a foul scent, and the flesh beneath had been vaporized in neat circular holes half an inch deep. Blood soaked her side, leaking through the fabric of her shirt onto the table.

“I guess that’s it, then,” Quintus said. “We may as well eat her.”

Vee made a weak annoyed sound, and Alice shot Quintus a withering look. “Get a splint. You set her arm; I’ll clean these wounds.”

“I bet she was playing hero. She’s competent enough not to get shot so many times without doing it on purpose,” he said, almost mildly.

They tended to the wounds in silence. As she finished wrapping the bandages, Alice realized that Ivan was standing behind her. The severed tube of his gas mask was patched with a new segment of rubber, not quite the same colour as the rest.

“Vee will be fine,” he said stiffly when he saw Alice watching him. He put his hands behind his back like a novice orator affecting gravitas. “We need to talk.”

“Good.” She wiped her hands on the hem of her cloak and crossed her arms. “You can tell us what happened.” Quintus moved silently to stand beside her, still unmasked.

Ivan said nothing for a moment. Then, voice tight with exhaustion, he said, “We got into the city, everything seemed fine, but when we reached the generator complex, guards were everywhere. We’re lucky we got out alive.”

“But did you plant the device?” Quintus asked impatiently.

“I told you, they ambushed us as soon as we arrived. There was no opportunity.”

Silence hung in the air, thick and heavy.

“So, you still have it? We can try again later?” Alice asked at last.

His pause made Alice wish she could see through the mask. He seemed to glance at Vee before responding. “I examined it while you were fixing up Vee, and we have a problem. The energy frequency of the new fusion guns activated it remotely. It’s charged.”

They stood in stunned silence. Vee made a choked sound and tried to rise from the table.

Quintus cursed. “Well then, we go back to the city! Right now. We go, and we take it and shove it right—”

Ivan laughed humourlessly, a sharp, short bark of a sound. “No.”

“I agree with Quintus,” Alice said. “If we don’t go through with this, we could all be dead tomorrow anyway.”

“We don’t know when it will detonate. It was charged accidentally,” Ivan pointed out coldly. “We could have less than a minute, or longer, but the detonation can’t be delayed by more than

three hours! Either way, we would never make it back to the city, let alone into the generator complex. Not with the place swarming with guards.”

Unexpectedly, Quintus started to laugh. He threw his head back, his shoulders shuddering with mirth. For a tense minute, it was the only sound, a violent chorus much louder than if he'd been wearing his mask. Then, at last, it subsided. His mouth opened as though he were trembling on the edge of a horrific admission, or tears. But he closed it again, shook his head with a light snort of derision, and said nothing.

Ivan turned away. “I’m sorry. I’m going to get some sleep.”

“*What?*” Alice exclaimed. “We have to do something. We can leave it here, and bolt, or something—”

“*There’s nothing we can do!*” he yelled, drawing the spear from his back in one motion and pointing it at her, the sharp tip mere inches from her face. She recoiled, but he was already turning, swinging the spear to menace Quintus. “Don’t you understand? This is it. *We failed*, damn it! There’s nothing left!” He jerked the spear back down and a blast of static, impossible to interpret, crackled from his mask. “Don’t you understand?” he repeated, more softly.

Vee convulsed, trying again to rise to a sitting position—but her efforts broke off with a strained cry of pain. Quintus turned away from the others and wordlessly went to her side. He pulled off her mask roughly.

“You don’t need this. Taste the real air. It’s bad, but it’s *good*.”

“We might not be able to destroy the city, but we can at least stay alive,” Alice said stubbornly.

“Do you want us to leave Vee behind, then?” Ivan snarled. “We can’t travel very quickly with her like this. But okay, let’s say we leave her—maybe we get lucky and make it down the cliff before the device detonates. We still get crushed by falling debris! Or we survive that, only to starve in the desert because we have no supplies. Best case scenario, we get captured. Please, Alice—”

“It’s a fighting chance!”

“No, it’s a sentence to a slow and painful death,” he said. “You really think they’d put *us* in the arena? We’d be on the dissection tables.” Ivan tilted his chin and drew himself to his full height. “I’d rather die here than let them beat me.”

Alice slammed her fist on the table. “If we die, the *resistance* dies! If you just sit here until we get blown up—or vibrated to death, or whatever—you *are* letting them beat you!”

“I won’t be dictated to,” he spat. “I’m in control of my own destiny. I am—”

A beep emanated from his pocket, and Alice’s mouth went dry.

He pulled out the device, a tiny thing of sleek silver, only the size of his thumb. It beeped again, and a blue light flared briefly at one end before dying out.

“*No—*”

It beeped one last time, and before Ivan could drop it, it was detonating in his hand. The flesh and bone of his arm up to the elbow splintered from the force of the vibration, exploding outwards in a morbidly vibrant bloom of blood—and he was screaming.

Where the device hit the floor, the rock cracked instantly. The entire cave shook, supplies and tools throwing themselves from crates to bounce on the floor in a cruel parody of dance.

A rock broke off from the ceiling and plummeted downwards, impaling Vee where she lay and pounding her body with pebbles before she could even stir. Ivan let out a choked cry and

lurched towards her.

Throwing up a hand to protect her head, Alice looked for Quintus.

“Alice!” He was standing just under the open trapdoor, half kneeling, ready to give her a leg up. Without thinking, she dodged a piece of falling debris and pushed off to take a running leap into his outstretched hands. As her foot touched down, he pushed upwards and launched her out of the trapdoor—and she half-turned in the air, because he was shouting: “Go—”

But before she was fully clear of the hole, his voice was cut off by a shockwave that rocked the cliff side and blasted her into the open air. The world went silent.

A spot of pain blossomed on her skull. A sticky wetness pooled in her ears, dripping down the join where the gas mask’s rubber seal adhered to her singed skin. She couldn’t hear, couldn’t see—not with the heat, falling rubble, and poisonous steam erupting around her from all directions. She crawled away until she found a gap under a boulder and wedged herself into its relative safety, exhausted and shaking with shock. And there she waited until the sky stopped raining fire.

The shockwaves continued for so long that her legs went numb. A series of chain reactions set off the device again and again, shattering the earth until it must have been as cracked and pockmarked as the surface of the moon. But she could not compare, because no one had glimpsed the moon for years, and her eyes didn’t seem to be working properly.

When the dust finally settled and Alice could see again, the roof of the cave yawned wide, cracked open like an oyster. The floor was nothing but a jumbled mess of rock. The trapdoor itself, torn from its hinges in the blast, hung bizarrely from the cliff fifteen feet up. Debris smoldered all around with embers that blinked seductively as the melted rock sent coils of smoke snaking thickly upwards, beacons that broadcasted her location before rising to add their fumes to the noxious sky.

From the lowered contrast between the city’s blue lights in the distance and the rest of the shadowy landscape, Alice knew that it was nearly dawn. Flakes of white ash stirred around her feet as she walked, like scum swirling on the surface of a fetid pond. Or maybe they looked like snowflakes—but she couldn’t remember when she had last seen snow.

She could remember the old world—she had ridden a carousel, once, on a day out with her parents. The air had tasted better then. Better than the recycled quality of what she breathed through the gas mask. Quintus was right; it was a metallic flavour, the iron tang of blood.

She picked up a solitary capsule of oxygen supplement that had miraculously survived the explosion, tucked it into her cloak, and started to climb. By the time she reached the summit, the rough grey slate was stained red with the light of dawn, struggling to tint the smog that covered the entire sky; a warm glow, welcome after the harsh electric blue that always lit the heavens, and so ephemeral that it might have been nothing more than a transient vision of hope.

But there—on the horizon—she almost thought she could see an unfamiliar light.

The Heaviest Burden

By Natasha Ramoutar

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Polina Zak



ILLUSTRATED BY DOROTHY ANNE MANUEL

There came a day in my journey when I reached the edge of the world. Perched there was Atlas, dividing the skies from the soil. His muscles, straining, writhed like corded snakes under his skin.

“How long have you been here?” I asked. I stood, the whites of my eyes wide, peering up at the giant.

“A very long time, little one.”

I inched closer to his toes while keeping a safe distance. It was frightening to see him at his full size. It was like looking at a map—if you stare for too long, you realize that you’re just a tiny speck.

I fished around in my bag, searching for something to offer the giant. “Do you want an apple?”

He looked at me hesitantly. “It has been a long time since I last tasted the fruits of Earth.”

I took that as a yes and began to navigate the Titan. I scaled the rocky terrain of his calves, moving slowly so as not to slip, and made my way up his cotton woven tunic. I took care, pushing my way through the forest of prickly hairs that adorned his arms. Edging cautiously across one broad shoulder and around the weight he carried, I threw two apples into his mouth. I watched as they rolled over his tongue, like ships caught in the waves, and sank down his throat towards the pit of his stomach.

From this distance, standing on his chest, I was able to get an exhaustive look at the celestial sphere. I could see the Sun, his chariot ready to make its course. The Moon was receding back to her domain. The brothers Castor and Pollux were shining brightly, each the perfect complement to the other. I peered at Ganymede, who had been plucked from the mortal world to serve. I looked at the planets, some fiery and red, some with craters blemishing their faces, some searing with ferocity. There was one with a beautiful ring, another dark, desolate, and devoid of life.

“Hey Atlas,” I started, my curiosity getting the better of me. “Which single sphere is the heaviest? Surely one planet is heavier than the rest.”

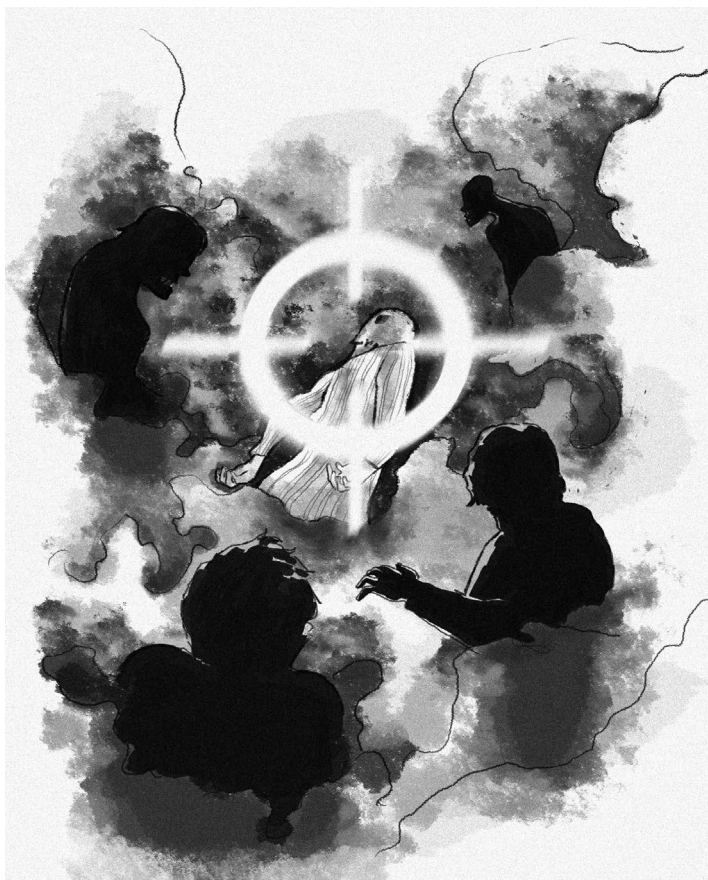
“There is none heavier,” he replied in a solemn voice, “than the one beneath my feet.”

Perched upon his chest, the Earth seemed terribly far away.

Target Practice

By W-I Farnan

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Rej Ford



ILLUSTRATED BY MARI ZHOU

His name was Buck.

My name's not important. It's a name you've no doubt heard before. A simple pairing of a common given name and a common family name.

Buck called me Jack. He might have called everybody that for all I know—I only saw him when it was just the two of us.

The two of us... 50 feet up in the crow's nest. Two thousand souls aboard the dirigible beneath us. Those 50 feet might as well have been 50 miles. To reach the crow's nest, you had to pop open a hatch and climb up a rusted ladder (with no safety harness, mind you) as the wind buffeted you from all sides.

This was cruising altitude for the large birds of prey that rode the hot air currents. I'll never forget the day a grizzly, russet vulture sailed alongside the crow's nest for an hour. For all that time, Buck's high-power, long-range rifle was silent. That day I learned Buck only killed humans.

"Humanoids" might be a better term. The experts argued a lot in those days over the definition of "human." They still do, I'm sure, but fewer people are listening. It's more common for folks to shoot first and burn the corpses later. Who has time for questions?

Turns out I did. Lots of 'em. Enough to make the dirigible's crew hate me and clam up whenever I came around. The captain of the airship was less hostile at first, but he soon decided that answering my inquiries was a waste of time, and revoked my access to the bridge three days into the voyage. The Bureau had given me a list of questions for all the crew members, and at the outset I played it by the book. That got me nowhere—if it was even supposed to in the first place. I ended up with a bunch of semi-completed dossiers covering the desk in my cabin. They were all destined for the incinerator. Solo in the field, there was no one to bug me about paperwork, and ultimately all my bosses cared about were results. I wasn't a goddamned census-taker but I sure felt like one.

In fact, the higher up the chain-of-command, the less they like paperwork. It can incriminate, it can stall action—and proper paperwork doesn't often correlate with results.

Besides, to get a pat on the back and a "Job well done!" on this mission, all I would need is proof of the target's death.

"Why are they wearing those striped suits?"

"Prisoners. Marked out for biological or chemical weapons testing."

"Human experiments, then."

"Ain't nothing human 'bout 'em now, Jack. Not when the radiation gets 'em. If we was on the ground they'd be ripping off our flesh an' pulling out our organs."

"I've never seen a prisoner-of-war camp. Which side do you think these guys are from? Who uses those uniforms?"

"Pee-oh-dubyas usually keep their uniforms. These guys is special. Their suits don't give no clues, but look where they're all heading—South. Repatriation ain't going to be no fun, I can tell you that."

"They just look like people who've been out in the desert too long to me. You sure the radiation's got to 'em?"

Bang

“Sure enough that I don’t feel bad ‘bout using ‘em fer target practice.”

Bolt slide

“Here, take a look through the scope. They’re paler’n you fer fucksake. If they was still like you an’ me they’d be gettin’ a nice ol’ tan out here. Not to mention—if they’re from the South, they’d be a shade darker than you to start with. One last thing—they’ve got absolutely no organization. Shit, even civilians march together someways—I say that from experience.”

Bang

Miles below us a head exploded, staining the sand dunes brown.

Leipszthou

By Bruce Meryer

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Stephan Goslinski



ILLUSTRATED BY AMY WANG

I always wondered why my grandfather had ordered the workmen to leave the railing and three balustrades missing from the balcony of his tower office. The drop from the tower, down the cliff-side to the ground, is about five hundred feet. To look over the edge, to let go of the railing, was one of the most frightening things I could imagine. I did not understand the meaning of the gap, or the name of my family mansion, until I received the telegram earlier today.

“Things are about to change,” I said to my assistant, Godfrey, as he stood behind me with the message in his hands. I had asked him to read me the news three times until the meaning sank in.

On nights such as this, beautiful summer nights of cool lake breezes that gently sway the docked air trains in their moorings along the shoreline, Godfrey and I would stand at the open doors of the balcony and admire the peacefulness of the star-rise to the east. In such moments, I believed the peace would last forever.

The view from Leipszthou had always seemed to me the view into eternity, and if not eternity then into a place where time, at least, stood still. Beneath the tower of Leipszthou, I could see the lights of Grimsby, the orchards and vineyards stretching along the south shore of Lake Ontario, and the lights of the factories and houses in the lush greenery of Toronto across the lake.

I never knew my grandfather except by his philosophical writings and his other works. I also barely knew my father. Each of them married late in life, and each of them clung to the idea that change was only necessary when it would benefit humankind. The Harmon Washing Machine was but the first step in a march that was propelled by standing as still as possible for as long as possible. If a shirt needed starch, then why not time itself? “Board-stiff,” my grandfather would remark. “That’s the best way for the world to be.”

My grandfather purchased Leipszthou from a Bavarian prince around 1905. He moved it block by block to the top of the Niagara Escarpment, and it was finished shortly before his death in the late 1950s. Well over one hundred years old, he stood one night on this spot, looking upon this same view, and collapsed by these balcony doors. What he left to my father, and eventually to me, was a clean world. “Cleanliness is next to Godliness,” my grandfather always said. He had dreamed of a thousand years of peace. My time, two hundred years after the Battle of Waterloo, was but a fraction of that dream.

Peace, cleanliness, and good living. Those words were enshrined in the constitutions of governments the world over. He had written those constitutions when his money and his power had brought the world together in an unforeseen harmony. Mankind not only celebrated the Lord’s Day on Sundays, but also Wash Day on Mondays.

Growing up in Missouri following the Civil War, my grandfather’s life had been dirty and miserable. His father had founded a hardscrabble farm and worked it until the flesh on his hands was worn to the bone. When droughts came and the farm blew away, there was never enough water for the horses or the crops, let alone for laundry. My grandfather went out into the boney fields one day to bring his father a dust-filled bag of bread and cheese. He found him dead, face caked with the blowing soil, his hands reaching into the air to grasp at particles of his vanishing farm that just whispered through his fingers. In that moment of weeping, when the world of his childhood choked in his throat, and his voice sank in his chest, my grandfather had a vision: the steam-powered washing machine.

In Chicago, he sought to patent that vision, though no one would back him. “Women have tubs and washboards,” potential backers would scowl when they declined to fund his enterprise. “The next thing you know, women will want the vote.” But my grandfather was undaunted. With what little money he had earned from shoveling livery stables, he boarded a train that brought him to Toronto where he found a banker who considered cleanliness a Christian virtue. That is when the Harmon Washing Machine Company was born.

I have an original Harmon in my study. It is a large oak barrel with polished brass fittings, chrome-plated screws, gleaming polished steel casings for the motor, and a steam-fired engine that exhausts through a handsome black pipe. Within a few years of the company’s founding in 1878, the Harmon and its succeeding variations, the Harmony and the smaller, more compact Harmonium, became a standard feature in every Canadian home. Women loved the idea that they could pour a small amount of flaked soap into the barrel, fire up the engine, and their clothes would become clean. On stepping down as Prime Minister, Sir Charles Tupper became the first statesman in the world to endorse a Harmon product, exclaiming from newspaper ads and posters, “I am worth my starch in a Harmonized shirt!” The old war-horse of Cumberland made a small fortune by putting in his good word for the machine.

“Everything depends on clean clothes,” my father told me the first time he showed me around the tower. I was not permitted to go out on the balcony, “Because,” he said, “it is yet to be completed.”

On my father’s desk were three books. One was a Gutenberg Bible. Another was Shakespeare’s *First Folio*, and the third was the *Libra Veritas* of the artist Claude Lorrain.

“Did you know,” he said, touching the right-hand edge of the *First Folio*, “that laundry is responsible for the great works of literature? During the Renaissance when papermaking was a new art, the sheets on which these books were printed were made in Holland by a family called Van Gelder. They gathered soiled shirts, used table and bed linens, and even used personal clothes of good quality, brought the rags to their factories, and turned them into paper. The idea of airing one’s dirty laundry in public was absurd. The idea of turning it into paper, on which great ideas could remain beyond the reach of time, was remarkable.” Every day, my father’s assistant would turn the page of each book, even if no one had paused to read the words on the previous day. I made sure Godfrey kept up the same ritual for me.

My grandfather always tried to outdo himself. He invented a steam-powered wringer to squeeze the excess water from shirts and bed-clothes, a steam-heated drying machine, and a shirt-press that added starch to shirts and took the wrinkles out of sheets simply by laying them on a padded, heated surface. The young Canadian nation beamed with clean apparel. Men could own as many shirts as they wanted because they were so easy to launder. My grandfather used the profits from the Harmon line of machines and purchased clothing factories in Quebec and the United States, soap-rendering companies, beef packing plants to supply the tallow for the soap, grain farms to feed the cattle, and so on, until he owned the network of businesses that fed the washing machine its insatiable supply of dirty clothes.

Then, he expanded his operations, first to England. It was my grandfather who earned the catchphrase “You could sell soap to the English,” because of his pioneering efforts there. The English loved to look tidy. Next the Germans bought into the idea. They were fastidious about cleanliness. Health conditions improved in both countries, inspiring my grandfather to diversify into the hospital business, under the belief that healthy people did more laundry and needed

more clothing. The French were the last ones in Europe to hold out. They held to the old belief of “parfum,” but eventually the Harmon tide overran the République. Africa, India, China, Australia, South America—all these places were transformed by the miraculous power of clean clothes. Thus, the Harmon empire grew to rule the world.

With such an empire, it is understandable that my grandfather was literally printing his own money. It was at this time that he founded the castle of Leipszthou. It was situated atop a mountain in Bavaria—no place to run a business. The winds and the snows often brought down the telegraph lines running in and out of the castle, so my grandfather solved the problem by choosing the lip of the Niagara Escarpment on which Leipszthou now sits. It was conveniently close to both the United States and the major cities of Canada. The Transatlantic Cable provided reliable communication with England and Europe, though he eventually installed his own, and his air train docks jutted proudly onto Lake Ontario.

The air train was my grandfather’s next great vision. Getting around and managing his affairs in New York and London was a small problem to solve. Helium-filled balloons with lightweight inner frames, made of a wood his explorers discovered in the Amazon jungle, were tethered together to create buoyant, massive, floating vehicles. A single train could cast an eclipse over a small town.

Powered by steam engines and propelled by large turning blades, an air train could travel over thirty-five knots per hour even in a headwind. From each balloon, he suspended railway cars that in total could seat over a hundred people. The beauty of steam engines was that, as they propelled the air train, the excess steam filtered into a secondary balloon system, so that the vented hot exhaust gave the entire air train more buoyancy. Toronto to New York? Ten hours. New York to London? Thirty-eight hours. The world became a smaller place. As my personal air train made its return journey home, I could always see the spray rising from Niagara Falls and the white towers of Leipszthou on the horizon.

My grandfather’s world was a place where steam was the supreme ruler, and he was the ruler of steam. Others had unsuccessfully tried to come up with such inventions.

A man named Ford, and some of his ilk, such as Buick and McLaughlin, aspired to run a horseless carriage on petroleum. My grandfather had an intense dislike of a thin-faced little man from New Jersey who wanted to exploit what he called “oil.” So, within a week, my grandfather put an end to the horseless carriage and the oil business, and bought out John Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Sam McLaughlin, and Charles Buick. He took their patents, rolled them up in tubes, and stored them in the vault adjacent to his office in Leipszthou.

Steam engines did have to burn something, and my grandfather decided that the best thing to burn would be an invention of his called Splatt, a mixture of cow dung, left over from the beef and tallow side of the business, and soapy wash-water collected from homes that owned Harmon machines, which was then reduced to a syrup. Controlling this mixture of carbon by-products meant that my grandfather commanded the entire circle of life, “from birth to death, and how to get there,” as he liked to quip.

Steam, the one thing permitted to escape into the atmosphere, changed the climates of the great cities. Trees grew lush. Drought was confined to a memory. It rained every day, but only at three o’clock, and the white puffy clouds against a blue sky were considered by everyone to be things of beauty. Cloud readers popped up in all the cities, replacing fortune tellers, auguring a person’s future by reading the shape of the clouds directly above them. Life was beautiful.

With such wealth and power, the crowned heads of Europe fell in line with my grandfather's wishes. After all, he could buy them several times over if he felt like it. The greatest danger my grandfather perceived was war. He remembered the dirty bushwhackers riding through his family's farm, demanding food and water at gunpoint. When his father left for several months to Kansas City to seek work, a vagabond, still in a tattered grey uniform, kicked in the door and grabbed my great-grandmother. My grandfather picked up his father's shotgun, and when the renegade tried to draw on him, after throwing my great-grandmother to the floor, my grandfather blew the man's head off.

Killing was not what upset my grandfather. The dirt of the man, though, sickened him, and as he shoveled dust onto the body, he threw up all over the bushwhacker's corpse. "Filth," he said, over and over. "Dirty, rotten filth." For my grandfather, filth and violence were the most deplorable conditions a human being could stoop to. War was violent and filthy. The instruments of war, as opposed to washing machines, ruined clean shirts. Those wounded and dying soiled perfectly good white bed-clothes. In his book of "Pronouncements," his one supreme principle was that "the destiny of mankind is to be clean and to remain clean, and nothing, no human drive or heartless disposition, must separate the human race from its destiny to meet God in a state of cleanliness." Those words are carved over the door of his mausoleum. The crowned heads and leaders of the world agreed with my grandfather. Though my grandfather kept a very low profile, his actions and philosophies brought about his portion of the two hundred years of peace, the end of which is now thrust upon me.

The massive defeat of the French army at Sedan had sent a huge message to the world: wars could be won by the power of technology. The Prussian needle gun, the Union Army's Gatling gun, and Nobel's invention of TNT—all these things made the world a dangerous place. When men went to war, they did not do laundry. Laundry was what made the world a peaceful place, and being the prime stakeholder in that peace, my grandfather endeavoured to make sure that military technology would progress, but slowly and under his absolute control.

On his advice, the nations of the world transformed their armies into public safety brigades. Instead of marching out to do battle with instruments of destruction, they answered the call of need whenever and wherever it arose. The shovel was mightier against a flood or an earthquake than a pistol. Peace meant that everyone had a far higher standard of living. Peace was the time when people bought washing machines. A man knew that if he left his house in the morning, he would come home to it in the evening with a clean white tablecloth on which his dinner would be served, clean sheets on which to sleep, and a fresh, bright shirt for the following morning, in which he could greet the day.

The time the Harmon saved was a gift for men and women. Not only could a man do his own laundry, but the free time afforded both sexes advanced cuisine, arts, and literature. Education was possible for all men and women who wanted it. Women were given the right to vote and equal pay. There were soon as many female doctors as there were male ones. Disease was almost eradicated because the universities, virtually overflowing with equal numbers of male and female scientists, found medicines to prolong life, thanks to my grandfather's funding. Indeed, longer life, my grandfather argued, meant more laundry, more peace, and more wealth. He had made the perfect circle.

That circle started to come undone about a month ago. On the eleventh of April this year, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Karl Frederick, and his wife, Maria, were visiting

the small city of Sarajevo in the Balkans. A man in a dirty brown shirt, which obviously had not been laundered in months, stepped out in front of their horse-drawn landau and fired into the couple's carriage, killing them both. Emperor Herman immediately blamed the Russians because the assassin had been born in Kiev. He called out his safety brigade, armed them with needle guns, mounted Gatling guns on the backs of wagons, and proceeded to march north through the small portion of his frontier that bordered Russian territory.

I cabled both of them immediately and told them to stand down. I caught the first air train from Grimsby to London, but during my crossing the situation worsened. The French Prime Minister, Monsieur Dedalier, mobilized his safety brigade in support of Russia. I begged Czar Ivan to relent, and told him that nothing good would come of this desire to despoil the beauty of Europe and stain the hands and bodies of his men. The telegram was intercepted by Kaiser Victor of Germany and, within hours, his troops were poised and ready to strike. I asked that a peace conference be held in Stockholm. Shouting and accusations opened the meeting, but I soon had them calmed down.

"I will not let any of you destroy the world as we know it. We have held the evils of war in abeyance since Waterloo, and now that it is 2015, there is no reason for us to unleash the horrors of a dirty world upon the masses. The *Pax Victoriana* was our chance to dream, and imagine, and invent. The *Pax Harmonia* has been our cornucopia. We will all lose, and I can predict that every one of you will topple from your thrones by the end of it. This is not the end of days. This is merely a moment in the great unfolding of time. We will be blessed by God in His heaven and by the children of the Earth if we simply let life proceed and provide a world for everyone where cleanliness is next to Godliness."

When the meeting broke, and when all the leaders, kings, czars, kaisers, and emperors had shaken hands and embraced and agreed to let the great peace continue, I thought I had solved the problem. I thought the armies had stood down. I was wrong.

Earlier today, while I was working at my desk and eating a bowl of beautiful green grapes from the vineyard below Leipszthou, Godfrey appeared from the telegraph room with the first of several messages in his hands and an ashen look on his face.

"Mr. Harmon, there has been a terrible accident. An air train traveling from Paris to St. Petersburg crashed over Belgium."

"That's impossible," I said. "Those things are made to stay aloft no matter what." We had perfected the steam air train to the point where it was impossible to bring them down over land or sea. And even if one should come down, we had invented parachutes and fashioned the gondolas into the shape of boats so that no life would be lost if something happened.

"Sir, according to this message, a German safety brigade air train had been fitted with a narwhal lance and rammed the passenger air train. The German air train was also carrying Gatling guns, and they opened fire on the passengers."

"That's absurd!" I shouted. "Why on earth...?"

"Our people at the Paris and Berlin Harmon factories are still trying to determine why the Kaiser would permit such an atrocity. The latest word is that a rogue officer in the German safety brigade commandeered and armed his air train and dropped leaflets over all the German cities on his route. The cities are now in a state of insurrection, and French parfumerie shops and haute cuisine restaurants are on fire throughout the country. The Kaiser, sir, appears to have lost control of his people."

I knew what the next move would be. Within a few hours, the German safety brigade instigated an absurd plan that my grandfather had long ago intercepted and suppressed. The plan, originally drawn up by an insane German officer named von Schlieffen, called for Germany to attack France by invading Belgium. I had a copy of the plan in my vault.

“Order the French safety brigade to mobilize at once. Tell them to dig trenches on the south bank of the Marne River to halt the invasion until we can gather more forces. Belgium is helpless. They do not have a safety brigade. Notify the British. The French will need reinforcements. We have to stop this madman, whoever he is, before he brings the world to catastrophe.”

But it was not to be. The Austrians, on the Germans’ cue, mobilized and marched their safety brigade into the kingdom of Serbia, and the Russians marched their troops into unarmed Poland to counter the Austrian attack.

“Godfrey, I want you to go to the vaults. Bring me the plans for the petroleum machines. Bring me the blueprints for the airplane, the tank, the electric light, the dreadnaught, and all the other documents labeled ‘For Future Reference Only.’” As I turned, I saw a tear running down Godfrey’s cheek. I stepped out onto the balcony and walked toward the incomplete balustrade.

So much had changed so little under the rule of my grandfather and of my father that an alteration in the course of life, and eventually history, was inevitable. My job had been to delay change. I was the one who now stood on the precipice, just as my grandfather and father had stood on the brink. I could look down into the void of death and not be afraid. I could fall, and let the world fall with me into an abyss of change and dirt. Or I could let the future finally begin, as it had always been intended to evolve. In that moment, I understood what the unfinished railing meant.

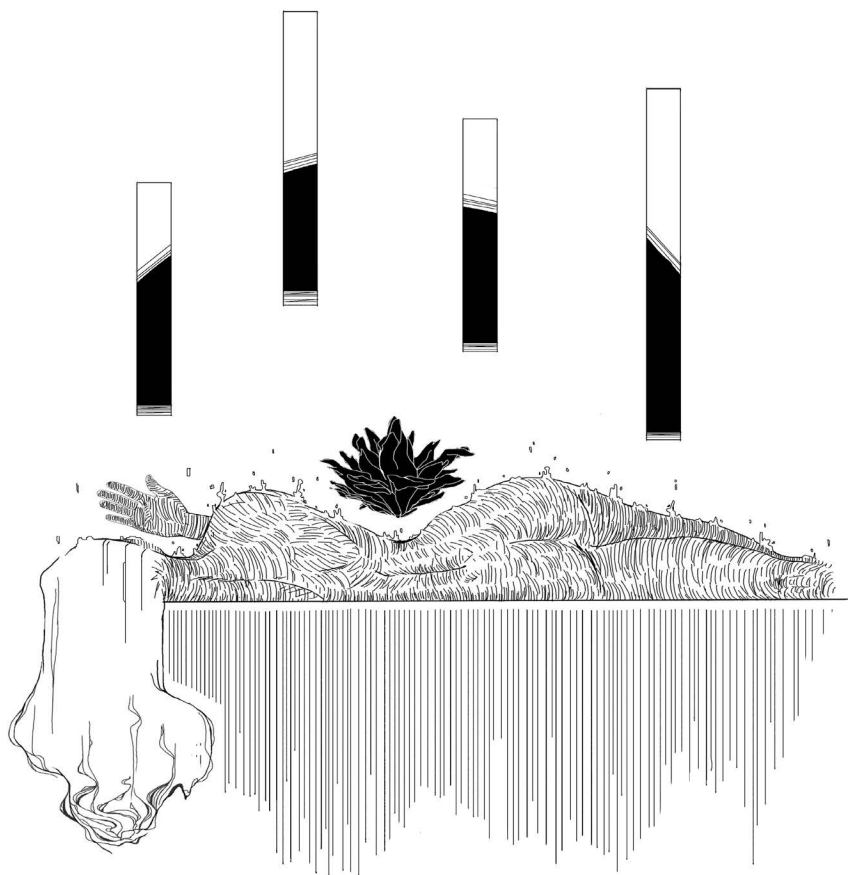
As I stood at the balcony door, the first stars were appearing over the eastern horizon, and I thought out loud to Godfrey, “This is the last night of peace we’ll know for some time.” I drew in a deep breath of the clean air. I knew that the air would soon be fouled with the stench of death and dirt. I thought of all the people who were slipping between clean sheets and holding their partners as they fell asleep together in freshly laundered nightshirts, unaware that by morning the world would be a very different place.

poetry

(S. A. D.)

By Victoria Liao

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Stephanie Gao



ILLUSTRATED BY LORNA ANTONIAZZI

dreading the fall will eat your soul
—is cannibalism a viable option?

the other day sun
sank
(never came up)
i waited for an elevator
(never came)
searched for the cure
(

she's on the couch again.
and i am a generous lover,
having jousted gravity and lost

we keep the cupboards stuffed with KD
— justin case! in mom's voice
for justthis occasion —

substitute 1 cup pasta for 1 cup brains

yesterday before the sun
sank
elevator: down for the count
9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2—

*one last try:
a tourist in evening archives
dodging what lies
in the shadows birthed by high-rises.*

This Apocalypse is an idea
overripening to rot.
we're left
with wordless pages
&&&d&r&y&p&&&ens
& the stink of decaying meat.

it was my turn to take out the compost.

instead let's bed ourselves in separate pyres
—composed of blank sheets
embalmed in stigma—
until we burn this bunker down.

The Knight's Inn

By Kerrie McCreadie

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Polina Zak



ILLUSTRATED BY RACHEL CHIONG

Standing at the Knight's Inn
on Google.
I wonder if I can perform semantic satiation,
a flick of the wrist,
and never apprehend those words again.

No peeling door or
gremlin hands, creeping up and in
to just-me places, hiding
in almost dreams that slosh
with whispers of
I guess that's yes.

But what fun would Mnemosyne have then,
me all empty and bright,
a pretty bauble in the sky.

So I pile into pockets of dying lady authors,
squeeze bubbles into some unsuspecting deep.
Everything slow until the

of a runaway browser,
too-full history,
and sleep.

click

A Fancy for Feathers

By Kerrie McCreddie

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko



ILLUSTRATED BY ANN SHENG

Army green jacket zipped up to my ears. Two eyes no face. I keep her in my mouth, full of cigarette butts and torn-down hawthorn florets. Ma's tupperware shakes between my fingers, all warm with fresh goods.

When God offers me immortality (we talk nightly) I shrivel up small and offer him no hand to dance with. Supplicant entitled. Her feathers scry for me from inside my pillow: sneaky dreams, love. No more libations poured inside half-hiding walls.

I bake cookies for her brother now, every time a bow of the head. I ask him, open up before her shiver fills me cold: "Why do I tell stories of angels when I can go bird watching instead?"

Prometheus

By Calahan Janik-Jones

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko



ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHANIE GAO

Mum spoke of him a certain way,
his hallowed face, sacred skull
and hollow bones.
She spoke as if he opened the wounds that fester in our family,
the man that filled our cavities with sticky tar.

My therapist prefers an interpretation without
imagination or mythology
and suggests the reason I started smoking was my soot-stained household.
But I reject hypotheses postulating Prometheus played no part
in smoke filling our kitchen,
setting off alarms.

I learned the way to waken Prometheus
from my mother,
with only a lighter
and an old address book
to play with while she wasted away.

But when I offered his name (scribbled near the back)
to my mother like hearthfire out from the hills,
she told me of his place
on some unholy peak in the Appalachians
where she had cast him out.

So I watched the 12-hour days of his Caucasus convenience store
and the support payments claw out his intestines,
watched him open his packs of sorrows,
and loose his smoke upon weaker men.

When it crept back into our kitchen
I paid his memories no attention.

I remember the glow of one grubby cigarette
lost on a city street,
still lit by a benign will
boasting its spark, billowing smoke.

Just to feel the fire again, I grabbed the stub,
burned my fingers, and only then
knew my father was alive.
Bones
and swollen hands scored with scars
fumbling desperately against steel

for that flame.

I fled home and
started smoking.

I found a place in West Virginia to keep the kindling alight.
A hole in the wall where Prometheus told me
(in fairytales when I was five)
he could rebuild a pantheon
of indulgent gods sipping ambrosia and nicotine.

I called him a week or two ago,
even though titans never answer.

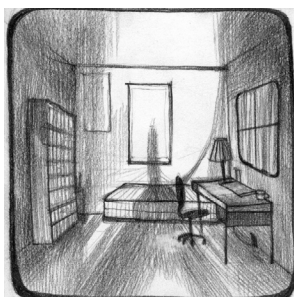
What I think he'll send me is a birthday card,
to remind me he's alive in fire
and that I should call mom every so often.

Or an apology, effigy,
his pleas for me to come back to life,
leave these mountains
as someone better than himself, above the fates
that won't forgive him.

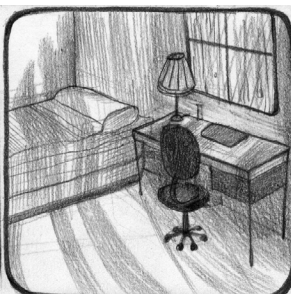
*graphic
fiction*

A Room with a View

By Sarah Crawley | Ed. Amy Wang



IT WAS LATE IN THE FALL AND
ONE EVENING I CAME HOME
COLD AND DRENCHED •



I WENT INSIDE WITH
RAIN AND SHADOWS



TOUCH TICH TACH TAPTAPTAP

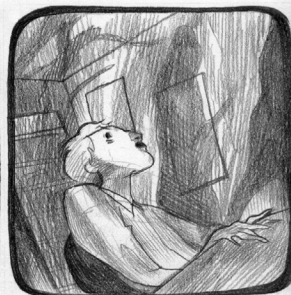
○



○ THEN I SAW THEM ○



AT FIRST I THOUGHT THEY
WERE A GANG OF KIDS IN THE
ALLEYWAY OUTSIDE MY WINDOW



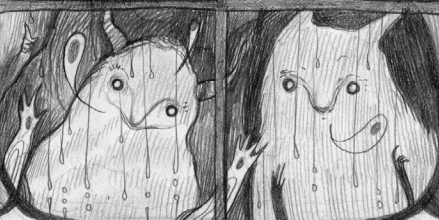
LIKE A FISHBOWL I SAW
THEM AROUND THE WALLS
AND STARING IN



MARCHING AROUND
THE WALLS



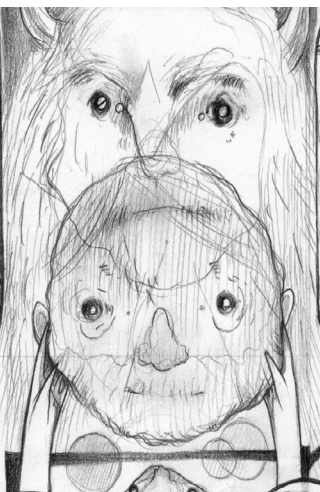
LOOKING IN ON ME



ALL MANNERS OF FANTASTICAL CREATURES, SURROUNDING ME, WATCHING ME ...



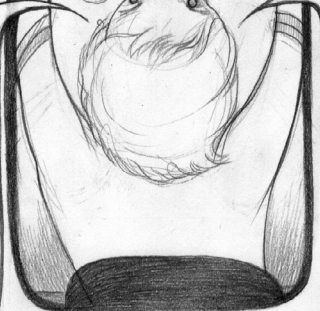
ONE KNOCKED AT THE WINDOW,
GESTURED ME CLOSER °
I TILTED TO LOOK THROUGH THE
RAIN FOGGED PANE °



AT FIRST IT LOOKED
LIKE KARL MARX

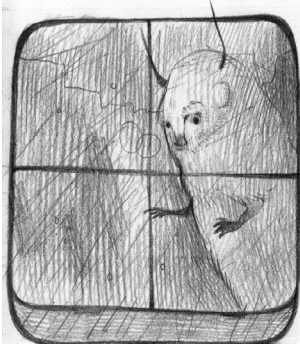
WHICH ACTUALLY
FREAKED ME OUT
QUITE A BIT.

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN
JUST ASK KARL MARX
TO STOP STARING AT YOU
AND LEAVE YOU BE

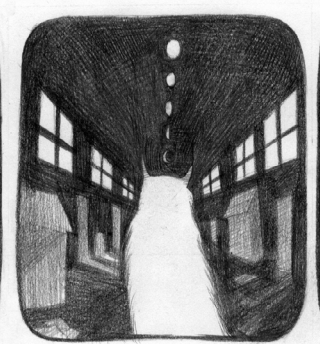


BUT I REPLACED HIM
WITH MY GRANDPA'S
FACE. THE CREATURE
KINDA LOOKED LIKE
HIM, TOO.

OUR NOSES PRESSED
AGAINST THE GLASS.
WE STARED AT ONE
ANOTHER THROUGH
THE DROPS °



EACH NIGHT IT WOULD
WALK UP THEN SIT THERE
QUIETLY PEERING IN
GINGERLY.



° NIGHT AFTER NIGHT °



I STARTED TO SEE MYSELF
FROM OUTSIDE THE WINDOW
HOW I LOOKED WAITING
INSIDE



DO I REALLY LOOK THAT
BLANK AND LOST ?
(WHAT A DOPE ...)



I STARTED SEEING THE
SHADOWS EVERYWHERE —



ESPECIALLY THE ONE THAT
SAT AND STARED, NIGHT ON
NIGHT



YOU'VE BEEN REALLY
OUT OF IT, LATELY !



IT WAS UNNERVING BUT
AT THE SAME TIME A
GOOD THING
TO FEEL
SO AWARE AND SO NOT
I STARTED MIXING WITH THEM

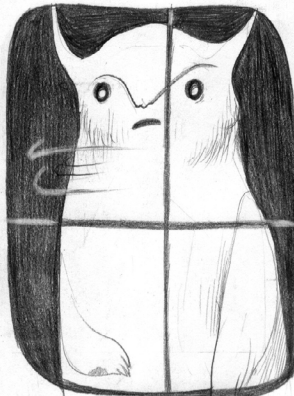
* THERE'S A WHAT? *



MY ROOMMATE INSISTED
SHE SEE IT, THE ONE THAT
CAME TO THE WINDOW —
MY SILENT COMPANION



AS SOON AS I SAW IT
THERE
I KNEW IT WAS A MISTAKE



HOW COULD I SAY NO?

W
A
I
T

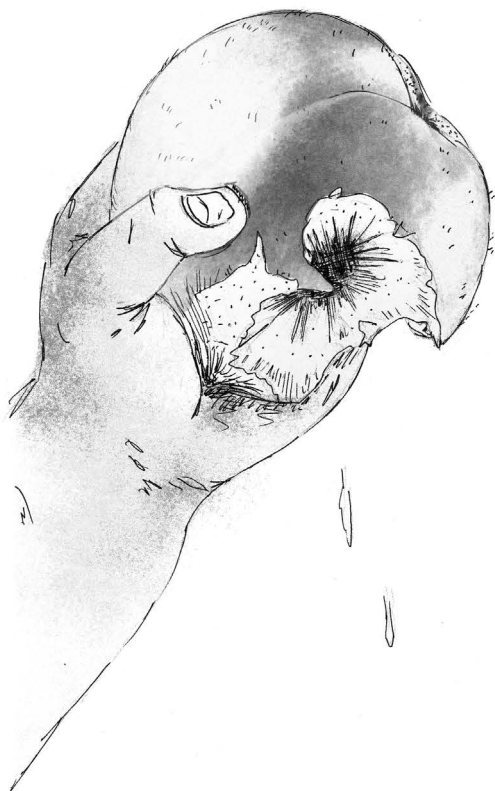
I DIDN'T
EVEN
SEE
ANYTHING

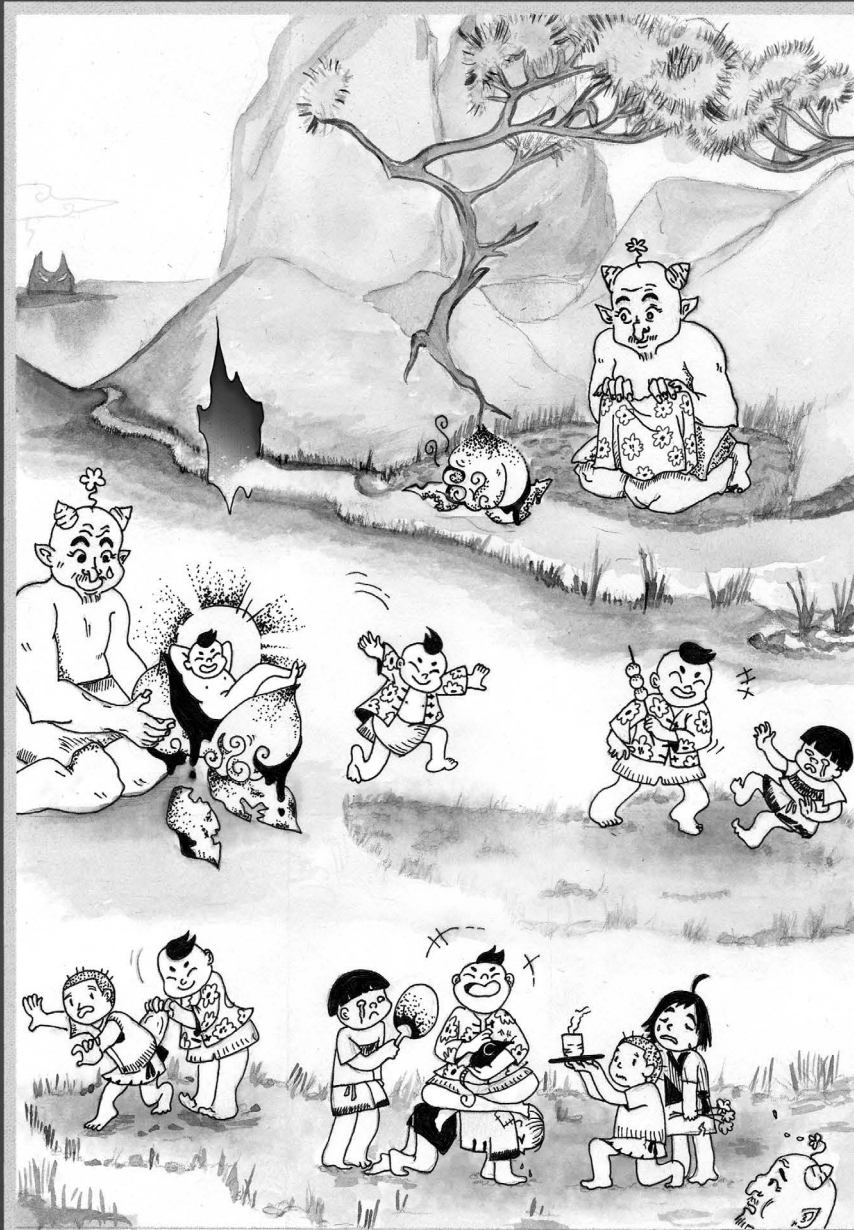


Just Peachy: The Tale of a Demon, a Princess, and a Peach Gone Bad

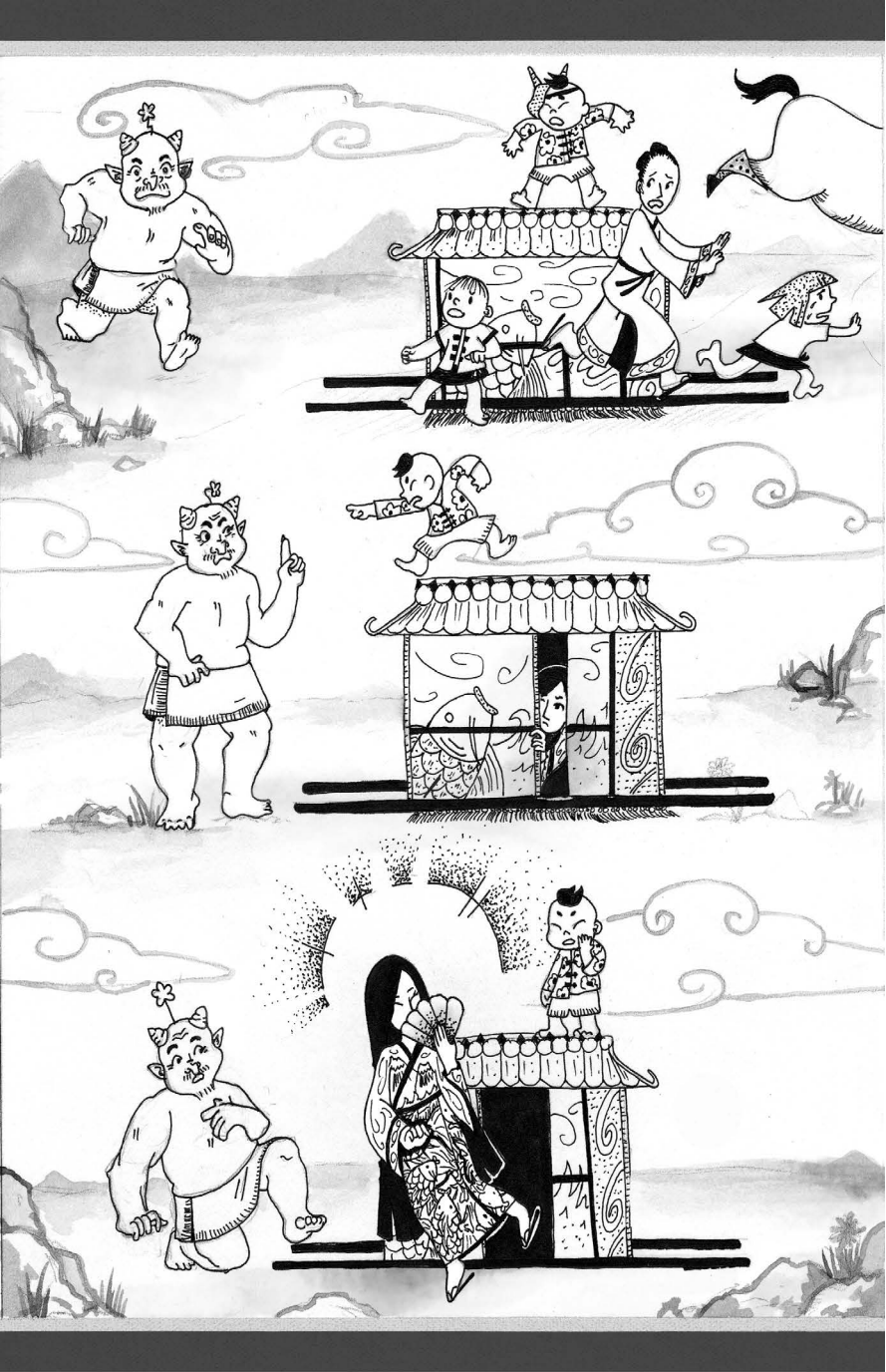
By Janet Feng, Dorothy anne Manuel & Kirsten Yeung

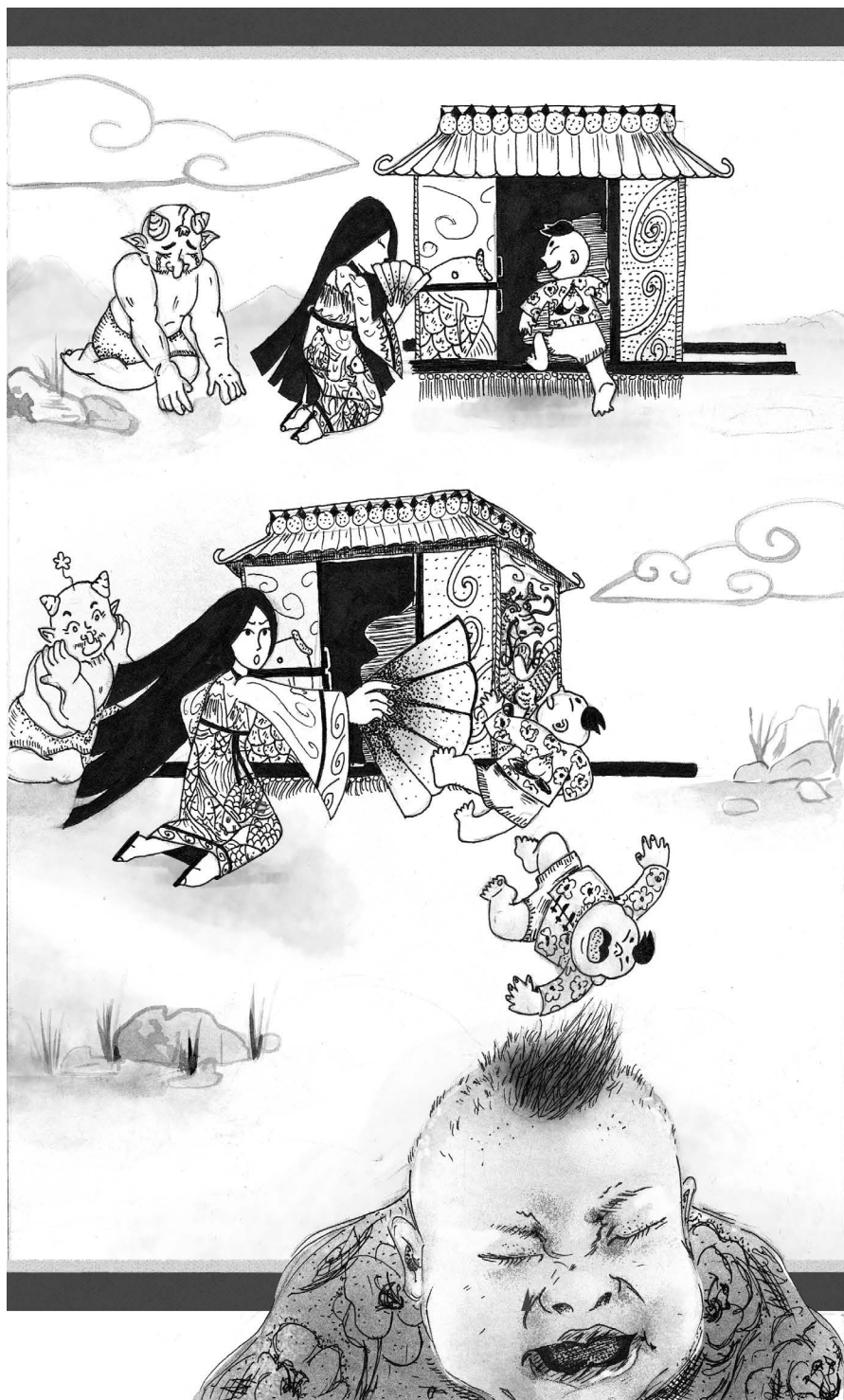
Ed. Amy Wang | Asst. Ed. Stephanie Gao













art



Eye

By Lina Nguyen



Untitled Collage

By Sunny Kim



Don't Forget The Lady of Elche

By Michael Baptista

*non-
fiction*

Representing the “Fear of Going Mad”: An Analysis of Grief in *Oculus* and *The Babadook*

By Emily Scherzinger

Ed. Janice To | Asst. Ed. Victoria Liao

It is no secret that the typical societal interpretation of emotion is highly gendered. From Sigmund Freud’s notorious work on hysteria, defined as a bevy of unconsciously surfaced symptoms that disproportionately affect women, to noted feminist critic Elaine Showalter’s *Madwoman in the Attic*, a critical exploration of the literary equation of men with reason and women with madness, overwhelming emotion has consistently been assumed to originate within a distinctly feminine sensibility. This assumption has not shifted; it is still widely believed that women are ruled by emotions, linked either to their fragile dispositions or to their menstrual cycles. Notably, there is active retaliation against this notion, recently circulating within popular North American discourse around the possibility of female presidency in America. Marc Rudov’s famous retort to Bill O’Reilly’s question about the downside of female presidency caused an extreme backlash, as his response, referencing “the PMS and the mood swings” inherent in women, ultimately implies that women are unable to control their emotions (*The O’Reilly Factor* 00:51). In response to this popular perception of women’s emotional states, women are socialized to keep their emotions “under control” for fear of encountering sexist claims of sensitivity, mental illness, or other assertions that draw attention to women’s inability to meet standards of masculinity within patriarchal society.

This dynamic is explored, and ultimately upheld, in the gendered portrayal of grieving in both Mike Flanagan’s *Oculus* and Jennifer Kent’s *The Babadook*. *Oculus* depicts Kaylie, a woman who survived through significant trauma as a girl, grieving her parents’ deaths. In a similar vein, *The Babadook* chronicles Amelia’s journey of attempting to come to terms with her husband’s passing. As these films explore the characters’ grief, the narratives turn to equating their grief with madness, configuring both Kaylie and Amelia into monstrous depictions of grieving women. Both films act as allegorical warnings of madness within neoliberal society by depicting the characters’ grief as tied to supernatural forces lying outside of their bodies in order to criticize any citizen’s unwillingness to engage with normative methods of treating grief, specifically with-

in the scope of Western neoliberalism. In this paper, I explore how these films work to police the borders of monstrous madness in order to reveal the social restraints placed on women's grieving.

Mike Flanagan's *Oculus* chronicles the lives of two siblings, Kaylie and Tim, in the throes of grief after a hallucination-inducing mirror kills their parents. The film plays with temporality, using flashbacks to jump back and forth between the present day and Kaylie and Tim's childhood. The timeline focusing on their childhood begins with the family moving into a house where their father, Alan, decorates his office with a large antique mirror. Through some unexplained supernatural force, this mirror causes the parents to eventually become withdrawn and paranoid, and, eventually, they attempt to kill their children. Alan shoots his wife, Marie, and then begs Tim to shoot him after coming to his senses for a brief moment. The police arrive at the home, take Tim into custody, and remove Kaylie from the premises, but not before the two children promise to meet up to destroy the mirror upon Tim's release. In the present day, Kaylie is an employee at an auction house, where she has managed to find the supernatural mirror after it was removed from her parents' house following their deaths, and manipulates the employees into giving it to her for the night. She takes it to her parents' old house and, with the help of Tim, who is recently released from the mental institution, attempts to prove that the mirror was the cause of her parents' irrational actions. Tim, now believing that there were no supernatural forces at work, attempts to convince Kaylie otherwise, but is eventually persuaded to her view when the mirror causes the two siblings to experience hallucinations. The hallucinations become so vivid that Tim eventually attempts to destroy the mirror with a "kill switch," which consists of an anchor weighted to the ceiling and set to an analogue timer. Instead, the anchor kills Kaylie, as she was standing in front of the mirror in a delusional state.

In comparison, Jennifer Kent's *The Babadook* tells the story of an overwhelmed mother whose mental health dissolves at the hands of a terrifying demonic entity, the Babadook. After the violent death of her husband, Oscar, Amelia becomes a single mother to their overwhelmingly aggressive six-year-old son, Samuel. The horror begins when Samuel asks her to read him a book from his bookshelf. The book, entitled *The Babadook*, is a disturbing story about a supernatural being that enters peoples' houses after three knocks. If you let it in, the story dictates, then it is nearly impossible to get it out. This book frightens the pair and causes Samuel to have nightmares. When violent supernatural events begin to occur, Amelia rips up the book and puts it out in the trash. Days later, the book mysteriously appears on her doorstep once again. After days of torment, Amelia finally sees the Babadook and it crawls into her mouth, after which she begins to terrorize Samuel. In the resulting fight, Samuel ties his mother up and forces her to release the Babadook from her possessed body. Exorcised, Amelia traps the Babadook in their basement, after which she and Samuel feed it earthworms to sustain it in its new home.

One of the commonalities between the two films is the formulation of women's grief as a precipitator of supernatural events. As a result of Kaylie and Tim's separation, both characters experience their grief in different ways, providing a stark contrast in the methods of grieving that appear throughout the film. Tim receives psychiatric treatment in the mental institution he was placed in, leading him to believe that he is well adjusted. Conversely, Kaylie's isolated experience of mourning without any psychiatric assistance is framed as "crazy" and "delusion[al]" (Flanagan 30:55; 34:45). *The Babadook* follows a similar logic, as viewers watch Amelia's consuming grief manifest into the figure of the Babadook, which forces her to ignore her child,

become isolated and mean, and engage in unreasonable behaviours. However, this monstrous figure can be reconfigured to represent Amelia's mourning within a disabling society. In other words, Amelia's bereavement is considered "mad" by a society that dictates what forms of grief are reasonable and unreasonable. These normative constraints on grieving restrict Amelia's bereavement to what is considered "acceptable" for women in mourning, and prevent her from engaging with the full spectrum of her emotions. The Babadook acts as a physical manifestation of this curtailed "mad" grieving process.

Each film conflates non-normative displays of grief with mental illness. This concept is explored in mad studies, a field in which scholars Jennifer Poole and Jennifer Ward theorize "mad grief" as a process of "breaking open the bone," rather than keeping grief "quiet, tame, dry and controlled" (Poole and Ward 94; 95). They argue that socially accepted processes of grieving are implicitly labelled as "good grief," processes which are most often "gendered, staged, linear, white, and bound by privilege and reason" (95). Due to this imposed method of acceptable grieving, "breaking open the bone" is viewed as a display of actions associated with "madness," and therefore is socially unacceptable.

In *Oculus*, Tim's character acts as the constant reassertion of the effectiveness of psychiatry, as he often rationalizes Kaylie's memories with theories from his time in the mental institution. Tim tells Kaylie that they "were just kids" and had "made up a scary story so [they] wouldn't have to accept the fact that [their] father was a murderer," referencing their childhood trauma in which Alan shot Marie, as well as Alan's multiple attempts to kill his children (Flanagan 30:39). He suggests that Kaylie's memories of the supernatural events were merely "protections to help [her] cope" consisting of "random information" that was then sorted into a narrative, a loose description of the "fuzzy trace theory" that was proven based on his testimonies of his childhood in the psychiatric institution (Flanagan 33:28; 44:35). Indeed, Tim is the embodied representation of the supposed successes of psychiatric treatment. However, Kaylie calls him "brainwashed" and states, "they did a bang-up job on you in there, didn't they? You were perfectly normal when they locked you up. You had to go bat-shit to get out" (Flanagan 47:18; 48:00). Kaylie represents the film's alternative ideology—the one that suggests that psychiatry is the "bat-shit" method of grieving rather than "mad" grieving. Nevertheless, the narrative undermines its own formulation. We see Kaylie slowly involving Tim in the deadly challenge of destroying the mirror, which is configured as the "sick" method of grieving because it results in the onset of hallucinations (Flanagan 48:50). Psychiatric help is thus established as the safer and more productive method of "getting over" grief, while Kaylie's influence on Tim is framed as one that leads him down a path of madness. When Kaylie dies and Tim lapses into madness as he is arrested, viewers are led to believe that their demise could have been avoided if only Tim had not reconnected with his sister after his release and "protect[ed] [his] recovery" (Flanagan 03:37). This turn of events at the end of the film configures Kaylie's incessant attempts to "kill" the mirror with Tim as mad, harmful expressions of grief that must be prevented through psychiatric intervention.

The Babadook follows a similar dynamic as *Oculus*, in which Amelia is repeatedly publicly shamed for not being a good mother, which comes as a result of giving herself and Samuel permission to grieve "mad[ly]" and "break open the bone." However, the film clearly favours normative displays of grieving; both Amelia and Samuel experience heavy policing as they mourn outside the hegemonic sites of grief, until they ultimately choose to grieve in accepted

ways as a result of these disciplinary actions. Amelia snaps at one of her sister's friends at her niece's birthday party after she remarks, "I do volunteer work with some disadvantaged women, and a few of them have lost their husbands, and they find it very hard" (Kent 28:16). As a result, Amelia is ostracized from the group. Almost simultaneously, Samuel pushes his cousin out of a treehouse after she continuously taunts him about his deceased father. Amelia's sister, Claire, blames Amelia for her inability to control Samuel, even though he was clearly incited by Claire's child (Kent 29:27; 30:11). In both situations, her sister emotionally polices Amelia, refusing her the space to grieve madly. Claire asks Amelia, "As soon as anyone mentions Oscar, you can't cope. [...] Isn't it time you moved on?" (Kent 29:30). Claire is suggesting that grief is something to "get over" quickly for the sake of those outside the experience of loss, rather than acknowledging and providing Amelia with a space to grieve, uninhibited by societal pressures and restrictions.

Amelia's mounting stress parallels the film's progression, and at the apex of the plot, viewers finally meet the Babadook. The creature torments Amelia and Samuel until it possesses her by crawling into her mouth, an antagonistic representation of her grief consuming her until she is no longer recognizable as her former self (Kent 46:00). As a result of the Babadook's possession, Amelia kills her dog and starts verbally and physically abusing her son, eventually attempting to kill him (Kent 1:08:56; 50:20). These actions, which are portrayed as "mad" or "crazy," pathologize mad grief; the viewer is encouraged to consider mad grieving as a symptom of violent, frightening, and deadly mental illness associated with women's psychic fragility. In failing to progress towards a final stage of "normalcy," Amelia is portrayed as choosing to be consumed by her emotions rather than favouring reason and objectivist societal "truths" concerning the proper methods and practices of grieving (Poole and Ward 98). It is only when she is forced through the Babadook's projections to watch her late husband die once more as a final farewell that she is able to overcome her grief (Kent 1:17:26). While valiantly holding her son, Amelia screams at the Babadook, "You are trespassing in my house!" in a metaphoric assault on the mad grief "trespassing" in her otherwise sane mind (Kent 1:19:46). Amelia is thus able to "tame" the Babadook and keep it locked in her basement, and thereafter grieve in a socially acceptable way (Kent 1:20:45). The film ends with Amelia snuggling with Samuel, finally at peace after "getting over" their grief. Hence, *The Babadook* can be considered a warning against mad grief; anyone who succumbs to the "trespassing" grief will meet their untimely demise, while anyone who manages to overcome their mad bereavement will be rewarded with happiness and freedom in the end.

The films epitomize the movement from negative discourses of "badness, immorality, or delinquency" to mental illness, revealing its ideological underbelly as a neoliberal project (Martens). Neoliberalism requires its citizens to be independent units, engaging with and governed by the economic market "as a practice of freedom" in order to reproduce a grossly inequitable system that favours businesses (Martens). In its equation of freedom with individual governance, "neo-liberalism equates moral responsibility with rational action," resulting in dependence becoming the antithesis of a country's freedom (Brown 6). Mental illness, in particular, is considered a failure to entrepreneurialize and capitalize on the self within a neoliberal environment that requires individuals to "provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions" (Brown 6). Consequently, mental illness becomes demonized, and people living with mental illness are positioned as lazy, overdramatic, or strains on government support.

The monster figure is a tool through which hegemonic society warns against missteps that place private bodies outside the realm of cultural purity and neoliberal citizenry. “To step outside this official geography,” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen suggests, “is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself” (12). Cohen turns to the colonial construction of Indigenous people as savages to outline the motive for fabricating monstrosity: this construction benefits the white settler agenda, as it provides a justification for manifest destiny and the claim to Indigenous land. In his articulation of the colonial rationale, Cohen demonstrates the process of identity formation inherent in this dynamic. The monster is abject: a beast against which normative society can define itself, as well as form identities in opposition to the non-normative creature. Anybody engaging with an alternative geography, such as disability, “self-identified gender, sexuality, and race,” thereby rejects the project of neoliberal citizenry, and is subsequently established as monstrous through their “monstrous difference,” displacing them into the margins (Poole and Ward 102; Cohen 7).

The rejection of normative displays of grieving, as equated with madness, is constructed as monstrous because those grieving are considered part of a marginal population. As explored in *Oculus* and *The Babadook*, the characters associated with mad grief are female, and hence restricted to certain roles when grieving, such as maintaining a highly gendered performance of grace, dignity, and silence. To grieve madly, as suggested in each film, is to step into a dangerous zone of abjection. The women in these films transgress normative performances of grief and step into the margins, making them monstrous figures. Mad grief is dangerous within normative society, as it not only abandons the neoliberal project, but also threatens its very existence. People “performing [madness] destabilize ideas of being and knowing but in different ways” (Martens). Yet, mad studies suggests that madness is not the end of one’s own selfhood. Rather, it is a space of possibilities and alternative knowledge structures, not an antagonistic and dangerous site of “sick[ness], disab[ility], unreliab[ility], and, possibly, violen[ce]” (Poole and Ward 96-97). Grieving mad is radical and potentially revolutionary; the renouncement of current normative societal formulas simultaneously works as a refusal to engage with overarching oppressive neoliberal structures.

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Interview with Amanda Sun

By Margaryta Golovchenko

Ed. Janice To

My relationship with the *Paper Gods* trilogy, now one of my favourite Young Adult series, began when I entered a writing contest with a simple requirement: write a haiku on the topic of loneliness, following the 5/7/5 syllable count. I had never written a haiku before, and had only recently begun to experiment with writing poetry.

The prize for each of the ten winners was an autographed copy of *INK*, the first book in the *Paper Gods* series. I decided to take on the challenge and entered. To my surprise, I was chosen as one of the winners. After receiving my copy in the mail, I became intrigued by the novel's focus on Japanese myths—narratives largely unexplored in YA novels. I was soon engrossed by the protagonist Katie Greene's journey as she moves to Japan and ends up uncovering the ancient secret of the *Kami*, Japanese spirits of nature.

I got in touch with the author, Amanda Sun, to find out more about *Paper Gods*. In the process, I discovered a few pleasant surprises, including the fact that she's a University of Toronto alumnus!

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: As a student, did you have a favourite place on campus to sit and write?

A: I actually did most of my writing in my dorm room, but when I craved inspiration, there were a few places on campus where I could find it. I loved wandering through University College, with all its staircases and strange rooms. The courtyard of Hart House was also an ideal spot. I spent lots of time in both places dreaming up ideas. I really liked the arcing ceilings of Trinity Chapel as well; I was often tiptoeing around in there, listening to the echoes of every footstep.

Q: Is there a specific atmosphere or set of conditions that you prefer to write in?

A: I have to be alone with the door closed and good music playing. I also love writing late at night. I think writing is almost like dreaming. You travel deep inside yourself, and play out scenes and images to the point where you're just writing down what you witness the characters saying and doing. I used to write almost all night, then take my daughter to school before

having a nap. Now my life isn't quite as flexible, so I do most of my writing in the afternoon. But there is something very special about writing with atmospheric music and candlelight while the world is sleeping, and I do miss it.

Q: Have you ever had to deal with writer's block? How do you overcome it?

A: Writer's block tends to hit me about 20 000 words into a novel. I usually start a story knowing the beginning, the ending, and a few events strung along the way. The gaps are what trip me up. How do you get from A to B to C? I have what I call my "writer's well." I can write a certain number of words in a day, usually up to 3000, and then my well dries up. I really don't know what happens next, and I have to wait and daydream until the well fills up again before continuing. If I'm still not sure what happens, I'll try writing something and see if it feels right. Usually the dead ends are obvious, and by writing the wrong way, I've at least learned something about my characters and my book, so the words aren't wasted even if they're cut.

Q: Are there any specific people or experiences that have shaped you as a writer?

A: Living as an exchange student in Japan definitely shaped the *Paper Gods* series. I wouldn't have had the knowledge to write about Japan without having lived there, no matter how much research I'd done. Authenticity was really important to me: I wanted to share the experiences I'd had there with the reader in the most honest way possible.

In terms of other writers, my biggest influences and inspirations are Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman, and Patrick Ness for his *Chaos Walking* series. Reading their works has really helped me to shape my own literary voice.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge as an author?

A: Probably getting published! It's a long, hard road, and it involves accepting that you're not the special snowflake who gets to skip ahead. You start out with rejections like everyone else, and you have to develop a tough skin. Then you have to learn how to work with your agent and your editor, how to apply edits to take your book to the next level. And even after you've put in so much heart and effort, you have very little control (okay, none) over how that book is going to do in the market, or how those sales numbers will affect your next pitch. It's a tough industry, but the best thing is that we're all in it together. You don't compete with other authors, you befriend them—because no one has to read only one book. Writers are supportive and creative and some of the most wonderful people I've met.

Q: Are there any specific ideas or themes that you've always wanted to write about?

A: After living in Japan, I couldn't find the words to express how it had influenced me. I think the *Paper Gods* finally allowed me to share my love of the culture and my experiences in it.

However, it's just one of many stories that I'm hoping to be able to tell. There's something very special about connecting with an author or a reader on the page. You read a certain sentence and you realize that you're not alone in the world—someone else has felt this way. It's that connection that inspires me.

I love telling and hearing stories, and I still have lots that I hope I'll be able to share.

Q: Do you have a favourite Japanese myth?

A: I think the story of Tanabata is one of my favourites. I wrote about it in *INK* because I had celebrated the Star Festival with my host family in Japan. The idea is that the stars Altair and Vega were lovers forced apart by their families. On a single night every year, ravens fly across the sky to form a bridge so that the two can be together. I love the idea of a living, breathing, feathery bridge from one true love to another.

Q: Did you have the plot of *Paper Gods* planned out from the beginning, or was it a journey of surprises and experimentations?

A: I really didn't! While writing each book, I only knew the beginning points, endings, and a few points in-between. But characters often surprised me with what they did or said, and I found out more about them as I went along. I wasn't sure at first how to end the trilogy, because I didn't know how Tomo could ever come to terms with the power of the ink. It wanted to kill him, or others, and I didn't know how he could possibly escape it. While I was writing *RAIN*, I was daydreaming about *STORM*, and suddenly the ending just hit me. I was startled all night! I quickly made some notes, including certain parts of dialogue that had to be said. It was almost a year, though, before I could finally write the scene that I imagined at that moment.

Q: Were any of your characters from the *Paper Gods* series based on personal acquaintances?

A: Every character that I write has some truth that I've experienced. For example, my host sister studied fashion in university, and that's what one of the characters, Yuki, hopes to study as well. While I made different cultural mistakes in Japan than Katie does, we do share some experiences, like cherry blossom viewing in the park or eating dango for the first time. There are fragments of myself and things I've experienced or observed in all of my characters, but none of them are directly related to anyone I know. It's a bit like a dream, really. There are bits of meaning and purpose, but they're all a bit mixed up, and none of them are quite the way they seem when you're awake.

Q: After finishing the series, do you still wonder about the characters' future and how their lives unfolded, or do you put them away to focus on a new project?

I definitely still think about them from time to time! I don't usually know anything certain, but I just wonder about them like I wonder about characters from books I enjoy. They do tend to quiet down a bit once I've written their stories. Hopefully that means they're content.

Q: Could you tell us a bit about your upcoming novel *Heir to the Sky*? Where will you be taking readers this time, and what kind of journey can we look forward to?

A: *Heir* is the story of the sheltered princess Kallima, who lives in a small village of surviving humans on the floating continent of Ashra. But when she falls off the side of the continent and somehow survives, she's startled to discover there are still humans on the monster-ridden earth. She enlists the help of a rugged monster-hunter, Griffin, to get her back to her floating world, but along the way, she discovers the dark truth of her home in the sky.

Expect lots of monsters, strange landscapes, floating islands, and pygmy goats. For a more visual prelude, I've set up a Pinterest page of inspiration for *Heir to the Sky*, so you can see what to expect moving forward. You can check it out, as well as my cosplays, on <http://www>.

pinterest.com/AmandaSunBooks.

Q: What served as inspiration for *Heir to the Sky*? Were there any mythological influences?

A: The main inspiration for *Heir to the Sky* is my love of RPGs and anime. I've been really fascinated by the idea of a floating continent, as they've shown up in games like *Chrono Trigger*, *Final Fantasy 6*, *Skyward Sword*, and animes like Studio Ghibli's *Laputa*. There are lots of monsters in *Heir*; the idea is that Kali and Griffin "level up" as they go along, fighting monsters that are fiercer and stronger each time.

However, you will find that there's a touch of Akkadian mythology in *Heir to the Sky*. Since my academic background is in Archaeology, I'm really inspired by forgotten civilizations of the past, such as the more obscure groups, like the Hittites or the Sumerians, that aren't as well-known as, say, the Egyptians. You'll see the [Akkadian] influence in the names of the floating continents in *Heir to the Sky*, character names, and history of the places.

Q: How was the experience of working on *Heir to the Sky* similar or different from the *Paper Gods* series?

A: Working on *Heir* was very different, as it's set in a fantasy world. It can be very freeing to build your own world, but you have to be careful, too. With both *Paper Gods* and *Heir*, I wanted to construct believable worlds that make sense. When you pull back the curtain, there needs to be further layers to the world, not just drywall and plaster. So a lot of things go into developing the history, the characters, and even the geography. There are a lot of weird plants, animals, and monsters in *Heir*, and they all have to be believable. Unlike with *Paper Gods*, I didn't have any source material to go on. While the ink coming alive and how it affects Tomo and Katie was my own idea, it had to tie in with myths already in place like Amaterasu, the lifestyle in Shizuoka, and various Japanese folktales.

Both stories have lots of similarities, though: monsters, cultural events, and banter between characters. Plus, I seem to write a lot about food!

Q: Do you have any other works in the making?

A: I have a short story called "What Harm" coming out August 2016 in the *Strangers Among Us* anthology. It's a collection of Canadian speculative fiction on mental health, mental illness, and the often unnoticed power of underdogs. "What Harm" is a dark story about a young boy who is sold into the ownership of a warlord, and the twists of fate that befall them as their lives entwine. I hope you will enjoy it!

Of course, there are other ideas lurking in my brain, but I have to wait as they slither their way onto the page.

The *Paper Gods* novellas, *SHADOW* and *RISE*, are available on Amanda's website, AmandaSunBooks.com.

Contributor Bios

ANTONIA ALKSNIS is a first-year student at Victoria College. She plans to study Philosophy, Political Theory, and Classics. A visual artist as well as a writer, she believes that storytelling is best employed by engaging with the world at large. Though character-driven, her stories aim to explore political and social issues as well as questions of humanity's role in the world. In addition to these themes, she draws on elements from ancient and early modern revolutionary history. The authors who have had the most influence on her are Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. and J.R.R. Tolkien.

MICHAEL BAPTISTA is a fourth-year student at Victoria College at the University of Toronto. He is currently working on finishing a major in English and minors in Literature & Critical Theory and Creative Expression & Society. In his spare time he is an avid reader, author of short stories, illustrator, and cook. In both his academic and leisure pursuits he is most interested in exploring topics of oral history, immigration, Canadian multiculturalism, gender, sexuality, graffiti, environmentalism, Iberian folklore, Catholic paganism, psychological genealogy, and urban planning. He is also a great admirer of cats and aspires to one day own one.

SARAH CRAWLEY studied History, Art History, and East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto. She adores illustration, graphic novels, and animation, and hopes to end up working as a medical illustrator. She is fascinated by nostalgia, myth, biological processes, and the urban environment, and is drawn to quirky art that explores these themes. Stylistically, Sarah is influenced by Czech, Russian, and Japanese animation, and by practices of miniature-painting and ukiyo-e woodblock printmaking. She still turns to Miyazaki films when inspiration is low, and will probably forever be trying to combine

their gorgeousness with the creative genius of Michael Deforge. More of her art can be found at <http://sarahcrawleyart.tumblr.com/>

EMILY DEIBERT is a fourth-year student of English and Astrophysics at the University of Toronto. She enjoys reading and writing (science fiction in particular), and has been published several times previously. Her short story "The Standard Procedure" was included in the first volume of *The Spectatorial*, and was later awarded the Arthur Irwin Prize for writing.

W-I FARNAN studies English Literature and Linguistics at U of T. English Lit was a mistake. The rest of the time, he does other human things.

JING EN-FENG, widely known as Janet Feng, is an aspiring writer and graphic artist who also happens to be a super film fanatic. She's been living in Toronto, Canada for the past eight years with her family and her eccentric aquatic turtle who secretly doubles as a ninja. Currently, Janet studies Psychology and Cinematic Studies at the University of Toronto: St. George Campus. Her greatest wish is to get her life in order and someday finish writing (and maybe publish) the novel manuscript that's been sitting in the recesses of her computer.

CALAHAN JANIK-JONES is a first-year student planning to study Linguistics (amongst other things). He spends his time writing when he could otherwise be figuring out his career goals or budgeting for university. He has a fascination with short fiction and poetry, and most of what he reads falls into either of these categories. As long as the prose or verse possesses some sort of magical lyricism, he's happy. He can be found nose-deep in stories nobody's ever heard of and, perhaps appropriately, this is his first publication.

Born in Korea, and partly raised both there and in Canada, SUNNY KIM has developed

a complex mixture of identity that primarily centers on staying indoors. She is a student, pastry chef, cat owner, and most importantly an artist. Everything she learns and everything she sees contribute to her paintings, especially the exposure to skins and flesh of humans and animals that she encounters every day.

DORTHY ANNE MANUEL introduces herself as an arts administrator by day and illustrator by night. She can't decide which she enjoys more. Both practices call to her as someone who is passionate about using the arts as a vehicle for defining cultural identity and bridging communities. So far, her artwork in *The Spec* has been rooted in childhood memories. Dorothy anne was one of those kids who read books about myths and fairy tales with her flashlight under the blankets. She still listens intently when her older relatives share folklore and ghost stories late at night.

KERRIE MCCREADIE loves board games, bad movies, and bourbon on the rocks. She recently finished her Master's degree at the University of Toronto in English and Women's Health, and is the health humanities nerd you never knew you needed. When not doing the communications and design work that funds her creative and academic obsessions, you can sometimes find her working on her current novel-in-progress, an Irish-Canadiana fairy tale that resists the concept of mandatory adulthood. Once upon a time, she was the inaugural Editor-in-Chief of *The Spectatorial*, and her fiction has previously been published in the *Hart House Review*.

BRUCE MEYER is the author of forty-seven books of poetry, short fiction, nonfiction, and literary journalism. He is a professor at Georgian College in Barrie and a visiting professor at Victoria College at the University of Toronto. His work has been translated into six languages and he is the subject of new book that was recently published in Spain. His most recent books are the multi award-winning *The Seasons* (PQL), *The Arrow of Time*

(Ronsdale), *The Madness of Planets* (Black Moss Press), and the short story collection *A Chronicle of Magpies* (Tightrope).

LINA NGUYEN is a Linguistics Specialist minoring in Computer Science. Born in Toronto, she's now a resident of Mississauga. She has spent most of her life drawing, and has recently taken up digital painting. When not doing schoolwork or art, she can be found hanging around University College. Her artwork is currently available for purchase through <http://www.redbubble.com/people/nathengyn>.

NATASHA RAMOUTAR is a fourth-year student pursuing a double major in English and French at the University of Toronto: Scarborough Campus. In addition to presenting her creative work at UTSC's 2014 and 2015 Undergraduate Humanities Conferences, she has been published on campus in *Scarborough Fair Magazine*, *Goose Fiction*, *The Varsity*, and now *The Spectatorial*. She works with *Scarborough Fair Magazine* and the *Students of English Literature and Film (SELF)* as a senior editor.

EMILY SCHERZINGER is a graduate student at McMaster University, currently working on an MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory. Her research focuses on the cultural discourses that language structures exist within, specifically analyzing nonsense as a subversive structure within "common sense" discourse. Her alternative interests lie in media analysis, semiotics, literary criticism, and feminist theory.

KIRSTEN YEUNG is a third-year undergraduate majoring in Toxicology and Chemistry with a minor in Philosophy. She enjoys swimming, drawing, and writing awkward bios like this one. If you would like to see more of her work, please visit her Instagram @kcfy_art where she posts her art, writing, and, on occasion, photos of cute animals.

Staff Bios

Editor-in-Chief

ALEXANDER DE POMPA is an English and Literature & Critical Theory student at the University of Toronto. He plans to study law upon the completion of his undergraduate degree. His literary influences include Mervyn Peake, Octavia E. Butler, and Marina and the Diamonds. Aside from reading and writing speculative fiction, he tutors English and does research in eighteenth-century British literature. His short story "Sasori" was first published in the second volume of *The Spectatorial* and was later republished in *Pink-PlayMags*, an LGBTQ+ magazine in Toronto. He is proud to serve as *The Spectatorial's* Editor-in-Chief this year, and is humbled by the dedication and imagination of all of *The Spec's* contributors.

Creative Director

LORNA ANTONIAZZI is an English Major studying at the University of Toronto, with occasional ventures into Sociology, Political Science, Creative Writing, and Women & Gender Studies. She likely enjoys more than the recommended dose of feminist and literary theories (with no regrets). As this is her third year at the university and with *The Spec*, Lorna has now accepted the truth that she's in this group for the long haul. This year she will continue writing, illustrating, and editing for the blog and journal!

Online Editor

SHAHIN IMTIAZ is a second-year student who wants to study and research Artificial Intelligence at the University of Toronto. Her most notable achievements include almost skydiving once and getting to level 95 in Tetris. She is also the proud recipient of a nation-

al award in literature from the Vice President of the UAE and Cambridge University. When she is not glued to her phone, you can see her reading, writing, daydreaming, or glued to her camera. She is thrilled to serve as *The Spectatorial's* Online Editor, and hopes to help *The Spec* be a loud presence in Toronto's literary community.

Copy Manager

SONIA URLANDO is pursuing an English Specialist degree with a minor in Buddhism, Psychology & Mental Health. Of this combination of studies she thinks that the meditative, introspective study of the mind is nicely complemented by the refinement of skills in creative expression. She enjoys writing poetry and writes literary analysis for leisure when she isn't tackling essays for class. You will often find her enamoured with a book or enthusiastically editing the works of others as Copy Manager of *The Spectatorial* this year.

Fiction Editor

LARA THOMPSON is a fourth-year student majoring in English and Classical Civilizations. No, to her shame, she cannot read Ancient Greek or Latin. Her other interests include Canadian fashion, film noir, and science fiction. Lara is currently a features writer for *theBUZZ*, an LGBTQ+ magazine in Toronto, and is a member of the Editor's Association of Canada. After university, she plans on becoming a Certified Professional Editor, a job that will deal with grammatical and stylistic inconsistencies and consistently earn her no money. Lara is thrilled to be part of the University of Toronto's one and only genre journal.

Nonfiction Editor

JANICE TO is an expert all-you-can-eat sushi eater, movie addict, and sloth-lover. She spends 90% of her day wishing she were a wizard and the rest of it being a fourth-year English and Psychology Major. When she's not lost in University College or in her own

thoughts, she's indulging in the mildly sadistic pastime of dragging scissor blades across grammar mistakes in *The Globe and Mail*. Naturally then, Janice is drawn to speculative nonfiction—and to horror!—and she is extremely excited to be working at *The Spectatorial* for a third year. One day, she will bake a cake filled with rainbows and smiles and everyone will eat and be happy.

Graphic Fiction Editor

AMY WANG has been a ravenous reader of comic books and speculative fiction for most of her literate years. As a student of English and Visual Art, her pipe dream has always been to work in the comic industry in some capacity. Her current dream is to become a space pirate. She is also a technical theatre geek and can usually be found lurking backstage at the Hart House Theatre or the Isabel Bader Theatre, adjusting lights and muttering to herself. She is so excited to be a part of the stunningly talented staff of *The Spectatorial* and has high hopes for the upcoming year!

Poetry Editor

CHRISTOPHER BOCCIA is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto. An acknowledged nature nerd, Chris is studying Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and English. He is also currently editing 'Red List' assessments of endangered lizard species for U of T's Mahler lab, which has graciously agreed to supervise his Master's degree research. Chris enjoys hiking, birdwatching, and road trips, and has travelled throughout North and Central America. His poetry and prose have been influenced by a wide variety of writers, styles, and experiences, and have benefited from the criticism of noted poet Al Moritz and best-selling author John Bemrose.

Communications Coordinator

MICHELLE MONTEIRO has been writing since her hands could grasp paper and pencils. She's learned that a pencil is an extension of the

hand and a gateway to the psyche. Currently she is an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, completing a BA in English and Book & Media Studies. At sixteen, her short story "Serendipity" was published in *Canadian Voices: Volume Two*, which can be found at Chapters Indigo. For more of her quirkiness, read her numerous articles published on arbitragemagazine.com or quantumrun.com. She is excited to become *The Spectatorial's* first-ever Communications Coordinator this year.

Layout Editor

ARIANA YOUM enjoys warm weather accompanied by berries, books, and a hammock in which she can occasionally nap. She is a Psychology Research Specialist, with a special focus in memory research, and an English Minor. Please excuse her when she gets abnormally excited over some obscure grammar rule. She is also rather obsessed with science fiction, and is patiently waiting for the day when she will be able to teleport. Until then, she shall design away. She looks forward to working with *The Spectatorial's* amazing crew this year, and wishes them much love.

Editorial Board

REJ FORD identifies both as a third-year Biology and Animal Physiology Major and as a card-carrying Trekkie. After devouring fairly awful science fiction and fantasy novellas as a child, she finally found Orson Scott Card and became a full-fledged fan of everything speculative. She spends much of her time explaining anime subplots to highly patient people, and the rest trying to reconcile the biological sciences with robotics—otherwise known as: how to turn her dogs into sentient AIs. She is incredibly excited to become a member of *The Spectatorial's* Editorial Board and to explore the wide world of writing and editing.

BEN BERMAN GHAN is a second-year English student at the University of Toronto. When he was four, he walked into a room

and saw the Death Star explode, and it was all downhill from there. He sits on an iron throne of comic books and understands theories of time travel better than he understands linear time. His first novel *Wycheman Road* was finally published in January 2016. Ben is so excited to be working on *The Spectatorial* that a high-pitched whistling noise can sometimes be heard in his vicinity, though it might just be him trying to talk at a speed humans can comprehend. He does not understand why he is writing this in the third person. Find him on Twitter: @Wycheman.

VICTORIA LIAO is a cat-lady-in-training and third-year student majoring in English and Sexual Diversity Studies and minoring in Contemporary Asian Studies. Having grown up on a diet of feminist fantasy novels and rich fantastical role-playing games, she has since taken a keen interest in the representation of marginalized voices within fiction—especially speculative works. When she isn't editing for *The Spec* or reading prose for *Looseleaf Magazine*, she can be observed humming harmonies and pretending to write. In her spare time, Victoria can be found binge-reading webcomics at four a.m. or expressing her excitement over digital story-telling methods. She is honoured to be included in this edition of *The Spectatorial* amongst so many fantastic creators.

POLINA ZAK is a quirky fourth-year student at the University of Toronto. She is double-majoring in Biology and Sociology and minoring in English. She greatly enjoys learning about different worldviews and being able to understand new concepts by applying ideas from the three subjects she studies. She likes to encourage the people around her to pursue their own expression through writing. Creative writing has been Polina's hobby for many years, and she believes that it is one of the best ways to relax and let off some steam—especially after a long, stressful day.

First-Year Editorial Board

STEPHANIE GAO is a first-year student who doesn't know what to do with her life but is studying Humanities anyway because her procrastination comes in the form of writing crappy poetry. In her spare time, she either attempts to draw, swoons over F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing, or feels too much for mythological and historical characters. She recognizes that being chosen for *The Spectatorial's* First-Year Editorial Board is akin to getting accepted into an Ivy League university, and she treasures the opportunity to get to work on *The Spec*.

MARGARYTA GOLOVCHENKO has heard every joke in the book when it comes to her name. When not maneuvering around her mountain of to-be-read books, she can be found writing poetry, which has appeared in journals here and there. Currently, her biggest struggle, however, is getting her novel-in-progress characters to cooperate, a problem she usually washes away with countless cups of tea. Margaryta is thrilled to be one of the first-year editors this year for *The Spectatorial*, and can't wait for all the adventures the position entails.

STEPHAN GOSLINSKI is a first-year actor and medievalist at U of T, a dedicated music lover, a hard-core gamer, and, above all, a storyteller. For as long as he can remember, he's been spilling his overactive imagination onto page, stage, and beyond. He not only lives and breathes graphic fiction (he was coughing up Alan Moore dialogue just last week), but he also maintains a burning passion for all things wondrous. He is inordinately excited to be part of *The Spectatorial's* team, and hopes to help to shine a light on all the wonders our world's imagination has to offer.

how to get involved

We are always looking for students to participate in the publication process of *The Spectatorial*! We strongly encourage interest from prospective blog writers, designers, illustrators, copy editors, and print issue writers. And every time you participate with us, you earn one contributors' point!

Contributors' points are how we keep track of how many times someone has contributed to *The Spectatorial*. They can be collected in many ways. Any instance of copy editing, designing, blogging, illustrating, or submitting is considered a point; you can help market us through posterings; and, finally, you can attend our contributors' meetings, which occur once or twice per semester. Once you have two points you can apply to be on staff for the following year.

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FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/TheSpectatorial

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